8-2015

SOUNDING IDENTITY: SOUNDSCAPES, MUSIC, AND TECHNOCULTURE IN THE CHINESE DIASPORA OF PANAMA

Corey Michael Blake
University of Tennessee - Knoxville, cblake4@vols.utk.edu

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Corey Michael Blake entitled "SOUNDING IDENTITY: SOUNDSCAPES, MUSIC, AND TECHNOCULTURE IN THE CHINESE DIASPORA OF PANAMA." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music, with a major in Music.

Leslie C. Gay, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Rachel M. Golden, Andrew M. Bliss

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

SOUNDING IDENTITY:
SOUNDSCAPES, MUSIC, AND TECHNOCULTURE IN THE CHINESE DIASPORA OF PANAMA

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Music
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Corey Michael Blake
August 2015

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother,
Jacqueline Lascano Orrock
and my grandmother,
Virginia Sue Blake
who, together, inspired and fostered my love for music.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my musicology advisors, Dr. Leslie C. Gay, Dr. Rachel M. Golden, and Dr. Jacqueline Avila. You all have helped me to achieve my goal of advanced study in ethnomusicology and provided me the tools to become a better student, researcher, writer, and teacher. Your encouragement and support have been greatly appreciated.

Thank you to my cousins, Jackeline Lascano and Jesus Aguilar. Without your help, I would not have been able to navigate Panama and conduct much of my ethnographic research. Thank you for making this project possible.

Thank you to Carlos Hernandez Baez for graciously helping me with the many transcriptions and translations needed for this ethnography to be complete.

Finally, thank you to Kenneth Shawn Bowling for your endless encouragement, moral support, and patience during the many days and nights I spent working on this ethnography. Thank you for helping to minimize my stress and for enabling me to do my best work.

ABSTRACT

Present in Panama since the 19th century, the Chinese diaspora in Panama City, Panama represents an empowered community of individuals who identify as both Chinese and Panamanian. These Chinese Panamanian hybrid identities emerge within sonic environments through an engagement with transnational media and digital technologies, notably within retail stores. Specifically, music surfaces as an especially important sonic marker of the Chinese Panamanian hybridity. Within the mall of the Panamanian Chinatown of El Dorado, an interesting mixture of both Chinese and Latin American popular music genres sounds throughout the various stores. This mixture of music genres demonstrates Chinese Panamanian agency in asserting and reaffirming the diasporic community's status as both Chinese and Panamanian.

Based on fieldwork conducted in Panama during the summer of 2014, I argue that the Chinese diaspora within Panama City shapes and asserts to its hybrid identity through its technocultural use of global, mass-mediated musical genres in the creation of soundscapes. Through a careful examination of sound studies and the transnational relationships between music technologies and the communities that use them, this study contributes to knowledge in the fields of ethnomusicology and diaspora studies. It offers a better understanding of how people in transnational and diasporic groups use and experience music to form hybrid identities. Additionally, the findings from this project open the door for further research in Chinese and East Asian studies within a Latin American context, with specific regard for music and technology.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

Chapter I
El Dorado:
The "New" Chinatown of Panama City, Panama

The City of Gold

In Panama City, Panama, the Panamanian-Chinese market area of El Dorado, named for the mythical South American city of gold, bustles with the vitalized life of successful businesses stimulated by a growing economy. As if ordained through its naming, El Dorado thrives with small businesses, growing in its size like the legendary city that eventually became an empire made entirely of gold. As the golden city drew conquistadors to South America in search of treasures, so too has this suburban area of Panama City drawn in Panamanian Chinese to engage in commerce and accumulate wealth. Known colloquially as the *Nuevo Barrio Chino*, or New Chinatown, El Dorado teems with people going in and out of stores, browsing the shops at a leisurely pace as if they have nowhere in particular they need to be.

Upon my first visit in the summer of 2014, I walk unhurriedly through the area, passing through the parking lot of what appears to be a small, two-level mall, surrounded by individual shops; the sounds of car horns blare from the nearby highway, permeating the soundscape. I closely examine the stores around the mall and see an interesting mix of Spanish and Chinese language signs with store titles such as *Almacen la cultura China,* followed by the traditional Chinese script 中国文化中心, or Chinese Culture Center (See Figures 1.1 and 1.2 in Appendix). I look around to see Chinese restaurants, computer stores, and other shops also displaying the Chinese characters beneath the Spanish name of the store. On these various signs, I see the stores embrace the red, white, and blue colors of the Panamanian flag as well as combinations of reds and yellows, traditionally representing good fortune, joy, and luck within China (See Figures 1.3

and 1.4). On this first trip to El Dorado, I am fascinated to see these varying combinations, seemingly representing a singular, hybridized culture made up of two distinct ones.

Walking into an electronics store within the mall, workers immediately approach me, offering to help with an attention to customer needs that I rarely saw elsewhere in Panama. In the background, I hear an energetic Mandopop song, a genre of East Asian popular music that uses the Mandarin language, sung by a group of women that reminds me of the music of the British group, the Spice Girls. The upbeat sound of synthesizers, piano, and guitar in addition to strong bass rhythms, and melodies reminded me of the style of various popular female groups in the United States such as TLC or the Pussycat Dolls. In the shop, everyone appeared to enjoy the music, seen through subtle indications such as foot tapping or bouncing heads to the beat. As I browsed the store, the workers continued to engage with Chinese popular music from CDs on their portable sound systems, digital applications on their cell phones, and video downloads on their computers. The music that the workers play is not commonly heard on the Panamanian radio and not regularly played in stores outside of El Dorado. This suggested to me a connection to their Chinese heritage while it also seemed to represent a sense of space in which to freely express their Chineseness.

Accompanied by my cousin Jacqueline, who is a fluent speaker of English and Spanish, we passed through El Dorado mall looking to discover the types of musical practices with which members of the Chinese Panamanian community engaged. I was particularly interested in those who are the children or grandchildren of immigrants. At one point, I stopped in another electronics store where I met Patricia, a young Chinese Panamanian woman, quietly listening to Cantopop, a Cantonese-language popular music, on the stereo in the background, moving her head to the rhythm of the music as she performed some task on a pink outfitted iPad. On the

floor behind the clear, glass counter, her young boy sat on a blanket playing with building blocks and an assortment of superhero action figures. Born in China, Patricia tells us about moving to Panama just before she entered her teenage years. She recounts that since moving to Panama she continues to listen to, sing, and enjoy popular music as it becomes released in China. Importantly, she stresses her attempts to expose her son to the culture and language of her first home in an effort to pass down her own Chinese cultural heritage (Patricia, personal communication, July 29, 2014).

Patricia continues to explain to me that it has been difficult for her to instill her interest in Chinese music and language to her son while living in Panama. She states that she often sings to her son and speaks to him in Cantonese. She tells us that a significant challenge comes from her son growing up hearing only Spanish music on the radio. At this point in my research, I realized that although I had wanted my focus to remain on the descendants of Chinese immigrants in order to situate the identities of individuals born and raised in Panama, interviews with the immigrants themselves could provide useful insight about the ways in which recent immigrants and their descendants inform the musical interests of one another. Through Patricia's experience of living in Panama since she was a child, I began to see how important it was to her to pass down her Chinese culture to her children. Additionally, I was struck by her description of the transmission of Chinese culture as relying strongly on contemporary popular culture, not just on the perpetuation of traditional genres.

Thinking back on what I observed and what Patricia told me, I began to wonder: Is this common amongst Chinese immigrants? Do they face the same struggles in making sure their families connect with their native homeland? How typical or unique is Patricia in the ways she seeks to hold on to the musical culture of her past? These questions formed the foundation of my

research in Panama and I would come to discover that Patricia's situation is not unique. Instead, much of the Chinese Panamanian community living in Panama continues to maintain and foster strong ties to Mainland China (PRC) and Taiwan, ties that cross global boundaries and involve music, politics, and family relationships. For this diasporic community, home is not tied to where they live. Their home is hybrid, representing a Chinese past, a Panamanian present, and even a future in which some day they might return to China. In the meantime, they create a sonic environment around them made up of aspects of these two homes, expressed through their music and the bequeathing of culture to newer generations, a process importantly facilitated by technology.

Struck by the use of recordings and the way individuals engaged with music through digital technologies, I wondered how important these mediums were for establishing a diasporic identity and in what ways the Chinese Panamanian community maintained a connection with the PRC and Taiwan. Cassette tapes, CDs, mobile phones, and digital downloads all emerge as notable technologies that bring music into the community's daily life, connecting them with China. The Chinese Panamanian community finds comfort in self-expression through technologies and several transnational genres. As I discovered through my interviews within El Dorado mall, there exist few musicians in Panama who perform in Chinese languages and many Chinese Panamanian people lack access to live Chinese musical performances as part of their diasporic identities. Since there are few Chinese Panamanian musicians, such as singer Brenda Lau, who perform in Chinese languages within Panama, Chinese Panamanians engage with mediated music through recordings. Thus, recorded music and media technologies emerge as paramount, enabling these communities to continuously shape and maintain their identities, stay

connected to a distant homeland, and express pride in their doubled and multilayered Chinese and Panamanian consciousness.

Thus, in this thesis, I argue that the music of the PRC and Taiwan ties members of this diaspora to the homelands of their past and aids diasporic Chinese adults in forming identities as both Chinese and Panamanian citizens across global boundaries. However, instead of focusing on the homeland, I emphasize that Chinese Panamanians inscribe their own local meanings within popular music to experience and express their diasporic identities. Through these musical experiences, they feel a sense of belonging within their Panamanian home. They can proudly express their Chinese heritage as part of their citizenship within Panama and as members of this society. Through various media technologies, the Chinese community in Panama also engages with China, maintains their dual identities, and proclaim themselves as Chinese Panamanians.

Much of this research comes from my interests in identity and diaspora. Having spent my life attempting to negotiate my own identity as a half-Panamanian and half-Caucasian male, I am fascinated by the ways in which other groups of people have come to terms with their own identities. My research has provided me with a deeper understanding of my mother's Panamanian culture, an understanding that I would have never experienced without proactively seeking it. I must admit that before I began researching diasporic Chinese communities, I was not aware of the profound and important role of the Chinese in Panamanian society. At the age of 26 during the time of this research, I never once heard mention of the Chinese population, the Chinatowns, or the Chinese contributions from the Panamanian members of my family. By exploring the deeper significance of music experiences in identity formation, I have come to understand myself on a deeper level. Like the Chinese Panamanian community in this research, I assert my hybrid Panamanian American identity, highlighting the Panamanian aspects through

my engagement with Latin American music genres such as *típico* and *reggaetón* within my research.

Historical and Cultural Context

In order to understand the Chinese situation in Panama, we must look at their complex and difficult history, why they left China, and what brought them to the Americas. These migrations and experiences reflect a history of marginalization and harsh living conditions. Researcher Berta Chen (2010) explains that during the 19th century, the Ching Dynasty governing China experienced the beginnings of political turmoil (p. 19). Increasingly becoming inefficient, corrupt, and tyrannical, the government could not handle the 400 million people who were suffering and many of them decided to leave for the Americas (Ibid.). Most of them came from the Guangdong province of southern China, seeking passage with British and Portuguese trade vessels (p. 14). The British and Portuguese traders took advantage of the cheap labor that Chinese immigrants could provide. In the hopes of finding work and making money, these immigrants intended to return home with the wealth they thought they would accumulate (Pan, 1990, p. 53). By the 1850s, many Chinese workers found work in the railroad industry in Panama (Chen, 2014). Thus began a long history of Chinese presence in Panama that expanded during the building of the Panama Canal and continues to flourish to this day, as I will discuss further in chapter 2.

Today, Chinese Panamanians not only continue to thrive in Panama, but also engage in transnational politics with the PRC and Taiwan. Since the United States relinquished control over the canal to the Panamanian government on December 31, 1999, Panama has formed diplomatic relations with the PRC. Siu (2005) explains that with the U.S. military departure from Panama, Panama no longer had to "keep with Cold War containment policies" (p. 37). Siu

further asserts that the maintenance of this relationship creates challenges when considering Panama's already established relations with Taiwan. The relationship among the Panamanian, Taiwanese, and PRC governments forms a superculture, a term anthropologist Peter A. Munch (1964) coined to denote larger systems associated with "prestige, authority, or power" (p. 369) that exert strong influence on the Chinese diaspora in Central America. For ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin (1993), the term "superculture" denotes societies that maintain "an overarching, dominating – if not domineering – mainstream that is *internalized* in the consciousness of the governments, industry, subcultures, and individuals as ideology" (p. 27, emphasis original). Since the Chinese Panamanian Culture Center's (CCCHP) founding in 1985, Taiwan has sponsored the construction and organization of the Instituto Sun Yat-sen Chinese school in Panama City, Chinese culture events, and community projects. Lok Siu (2005) posits,

> One of the most significant projects illustrating the symbiotic relationship between diasporic Chinese and the Taiwanese state has been the construction and administrations of the Chinese Panamanian Cultural Center, which includes the Sun Yat-sen Institute and Friendship Park. (p. 21)

Such educational and symbolic representations of strong Chinese and Panamanian relations mirror the unusual relationship between the Chinese diaspora and the Taiwanese nation-state (See Figures 1.5, 1.6, and 1.7).

Despite their prominence in Panamanian society, the significance of the Chinese in Panama remains absent in global knowledge and discourse. Lok Siu (2005) contends, "a gap exists between dominant perceptions of Panamanian nationhood and the reality of Panamanian society" (p. 34). Siu describes two Chinatowns in Panama that maintain a strong Chinese presence, *Barrio Chino* in the old Panama City (See Figure 1.8) and the suburban neighborhood

of El Dorado, the location of El Dorado mall where my fieldwork took place (See Figures 1.9 and 1.10). During my time in Panama, nine years after Siu's ethnographic research, the old *Barrio Chino* had become a mostly abandoned area, with remnants of its Chinese past represented through old signs on closed businesses. The new Chinatown of El Dorado, where many Chinese Panamanians have relocated their stores, has replaced the older one and continues to thrive with business. In addition to these Chinatowns, Siu (2005) emphasizes Chinese active involvement in mainstream Panamanian politics. Clearly, Chinese Panamanians are crucial to the Panamanian nation-state, so why are they so absent from global and local understandings of Panama? Though my research does not seek to answer such a broad question, it does highlight the significance of the Chinese diaspora in Panama by demonstrating how these populations form a proud Chinese Panamanian identity through sonic and musical practices.

Diaspora, Identity, and Technology

Diasporic studies often focus on people who have been displaced against their will, such as in the case of slavery or exile. English and comparative literature scholar Brent Hayes Edwards (2007), however, discusses the importance of understanding diaspora as a more complex phenomenon. Exploring the history of the word and its applications to Jewish migration, Edwards (2007) explains that diaspora does not simply imply forced migration and is not a singular event, important aspects that inform my understanding of the Chinese in Panama. Edwards (2007) states that dispersion of groups of people happens for a "variety of kinds of population movement, narrated and imbued with value in different ways and to different ends" (p. 83). Though dispersion may lead specific ethnic groups to migrate to the same location at different points in time, motivations are often different. Since culture is an ever-changing phenomenon, each migration brings with it new cultural exchanges. Musical traditions that may

not have been present during the first migration may now find their way into older populations within a diaspora by means of new migrants. As Edwards (2007) describes, diaspora can be structured in terms of different categories, such as religious diaspora, racial diaspora, ethnic diaspora, and nation diaspora (p. 83). Chinese diaspora, not to be thought of in the nationalistic sense, implies a shared cultural history including both Chinese and Taiwanese nation-states. Both racial and ethnic diasporas form identities as a result of differentiation from dominant powers. Even when there exists an absence of forced migration, diasporic populations still face the struggles of marginalization. My research focuses primarily on Chinese Panamanians as an ethnic diaspora.

The experience of music through technologies and digital media across global boundaries facilitates the deep connection that diasporic Chinese feel to a distant home. Since these populations no longer rely on local performances of traditional genres, young Chinese explore their Chineseness through mediated musics and technologies along a similar timeline as their peers in the PRC and Taiwan. Living in a society that wants to be seen as contemporary and cosmopolitan, these young diasporic Chinese choose to engage with popular genres such as Mandopop and Cantopop. Young Chinese-Panamanian parents, striving to pass down their culture, expose their children to the modern, Chinese language music of East Asia. The rapidity with which music is transmitted from one corner of the world to another means that the shaping of diasporic identity among Chinese-Panamanian youth must no longer wait for the next generation of migrants to bring over what is popular in China. These diasporic Chinese-Panamanian identities respond almost as quickly as the music becomes available.

In diasporic communities, like the Chinese in Panama, shared experiences among groups of people help create a group identity. Drawing upon ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino's (2004)

work, I define identity as the distinctive characteristics people use in certain contexts to specify how they see themselves and how they wish to be seen by others. Discussed in terms of the notion of diaspora, Turino states that identity formation is "emergent and 'hybrid,'" inclusive of a variety of different experiences (p. 13). For the Panamanian-Chinese, this identity forms from their experiences of living as a historically marginalized people within a Panamanian national context.

By experiencing music through digital and other technological media in the process of identity formation and the experience of belonging, the Chinese in Panama create what René T. A. Lysloff and Leslie C. Gay, Jr. (2003) refer to as a "technoculture," in which the emphasis is "placed on technological impact and change" (p. 1). For example, anthropologist Lok Siu's (2005) work with one Chinese Panamanian youth showed his desire to learn Chinese culture and politics through language programs and CDs of popular music from Taiwan, stating that he "is always equipped with the latest Taiwanese and Hong Kong CDs" (p. 97-98). According to ethnomusicologist Deborah Wong (2003), it is through such engagements that technologies have meaning. These meanings are "embedded in particular practices" (p. 143). For the young man, engaging with Chinese popular music recordings and connecting to the Chinese homeland rather than listening to recordings of much older genres, which are also available in Panama, demonstrates the importance of popular culture and the power of media technologies in mediating identity.

Intellectual Framework

In situating the Chinese Panamanian experience, my study draws upon several important theoretical works that analyze diaspora. Most importantly, I draw from Paul Gilroy (1993). Gilroy situates diaspora as a constant flow of people and ideas across transnational boundaries,

specifically addressing the African diaspora within what he calls the "black Atlantic." Gilroy argues that cultural relativism remains appropriate for analyzing distinctions between various black populations; however, he also presents another layer of analysis, arguing for an anti-anti-essentialist viewpoint for studying diaspora. Gilroy defines anti-anti-essentialism as the shared, racially-based struggles and marginalization within the black Atlantic that allow diasporic communities to form a shared identity, regardless of their specific diasporic community. This shared identity emerges within musical expressions. For example, the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a group of African American performers from Fisk University, traveled beginning in the 19th century throughout the United States and the United Kingdom performing songs that Gilroy (1993) states were "both American and Black" (p. 91). Through their travels, the Fisk Jubilee Singers embodied Gilroy's notions of circular movement, multidirectional flows, and exchanges between black diasporic populations across vast geographies, offering their "form of black music as popular culture" (p. 88). Likewise, the Chinese diaspora of Panama represents their shared identities through musical expressions within El Dorado mall. In the same way that the Fisk Jubilee Singers performed songs that were both American and Black, Chinese Panamanians create a sonic environment that is both Chinese and Panamanian.

Chinese Panamanians also share experiences of struggle, similar to what can be found in Gilroy's (1993) conception of the African diaspora. Gilroy (1993) uses the metaphor of a ship, "a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion," to emphasize the importance of the middle passage for the circulation of ideas and "the movement of key cultural and political artefacts" in a multidirectional flow (p. 4). Gilroy calls this phenomenon the "changing same," a term coined by African American writer Amiri Baraka (1967). The notion of the changing same

denotes what African American poet Nathaniel Mackey (1978) calls "consistent attitudes within a changing context" (p. 360). Referring to the blues as a black genre, Baraka (1967) states:

> The Blues impulse transferred…containing a race, and its expression. *Primal* (mixtures…transfers and imitations). Through its many changes, it remained the exact replication of The Black Man In The West. (p. 180; emphasis original)

In his poetic way of writing, Baraka asserts that black music represents the ongoing struggles of the African diaspora; the blues impulse embodies the struggles and transfers it into new musical expressions. Gilroy connects the concept of the changing same to black expressive culture throughout the Atlantic and emphasizes that even though the struggles continue to be expressed, the response and reflections on these struggles manifest differently. For the Chinese, the changes in musical expressions over the course of their presence in Panama continue to reflect the significance of struggle as part of their engagements with music.

Important to my research, Chinese language popular music consumption, notably of the Mandopop and Cantopop genres, helps situate a collective Chinese diasporic consciousness, similar to the idea of a collective black critique. According to musicologist Guthrie Ramsey (2003), even though the idea of a collective black critique and sensibility has been highly contested, researchers should recognize that many "cultural markers have remained remarkably stable in practice" (p. 41). Like Baraka's (1967) claims about the blues collectively representing "The Black Man In The West" (p. 180), Ramsey (2003) argues that black blues musicians used the centrality of the twelve-bar blues to express their "subjective, stylistic idiosyncrasies to knowing audiences" (p. 42). Across different diasporic communities, black musicians used the conventions of the blues that inscribed African American expressive features, thus epitomizing Baraka's argument for a collective black consciousness. For Chinese Panamanians, Chinese

language popular musics of Mandopop and Cantopop, consumed through digital technologies, shape their hybrid soundscapes and come to represent a collective Chinese consciousness, where language becomes a distinction from the rest of society.

Within the African diaspora, Africans and African diasporic communities faced extreme violence, harsh living conditions, and a life of forced, unmerciful labor. For the African diaspora within the infamous Atlantic slave trade routes, the historic and ongoing struggles and hardships mark these populations and reside within a shared cultural memory. Becoming what George M. Fredrickson (1988) argues was a racist society, the United States created laws and strictures, even after emancipation, to limit African Americans' societal participation, thus denying their humanity, an ideology that persists even to this day. Fredrickson states:

> In the modern era a campaign mounted against ideological racism, it has had considerable success. Societal racism, however, has retained much of its strength, and its persistence has prevented the full achievement of racial equality. (p. 204)

As Fredrickson points out, the strength left over from societal racism based around government legislation continues to agonize black communities throughout the United States. Similarly, Gilroy (1993) posits, the "various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship" are key factors in the process of constructing and maintaining cultural identities within a changing same among diasporic populations (p. 16). Through these experiences, African diasporic populations form a shared identity, regardless of their individual experiences, thus reflecting Gilroy's argument concerning anti-anti-essentialism. As I will discuss further in chapter 2, societal racism toward Chinese communities in the 19th and 20th centuries resulted in a shared dual identity among the Chinese diaspora in Panama.

Sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois' (2004) concept of a "double consciousness," as used by Gilroy (1993), also applies to my research among the Chinese diaspora of Panama. Du Bois used double consciousness to highlight the experiences of post-slave populations, with specific regard to black Americans within a white society. Expressing the pain of a plural existence, Du Bois (2004) states:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 2)

Du Bois' expression of the conflicting nature of a double consciousness, of being torn asunder, expresses the reality of identity struggles for diasporic communities beyond African and African Americans. In applying this concept of double consciousness to the African diaspora within the Atlantic as a whole, Gilroy (1993) claims that they are continuously marked by their racial and ethnic differences of blackness (p. 30). The Chinese diaspora in Panama are also marked by their racial and ethnic differences as East Asians. Further, Chinese Panamanians live with the experience of a double consciousness, negotiating their existence as both Panamanian citizens and ethnic Chinese.

Double consciousness has been explored in other studies of Asian diasporic communities. For example, Deborah Wong (2004) details the complexity of an Asian American bifurcated identity. She states:

> For second-, third-, fourth-, fifth-generation Asian Americans, arguing against a blood understanding of "home" is central to asserting Americanness. For Southeast Asian

> immigrants, coming into conversation with "the Asian American" runs the risk of denying very real connections to places/spaces they left under duress and, in diaspora, they reconstruct these spaces nostalgically… (p. 50)

This need to assert oneself as "American" while newer immigrants strive to maintain their Asian identities demonstrates the difficulty of living within two very powerful mindsets. Similar to Asian American experiences, Chinese Panamanians also argue against blood understanding of home, refusing to accept China as "home," simply because of their ethnicity. Instead, they define themselves as Chinese and Panamanian, where Panama is considered home. The metaphor of being "torn asunder" by possessing a double consciousness is just as real today for Asian diasporas as it was for Du Bois as an African American at the turn of the 20th century.

For diasporic communities, including the Chinese Panamanian diaspora, cultural resistance manifests through expressions of agency. Bruce Kapferer (2009) defines agency as the "capacity of human beings to affect their own life chances and those of others and to play a role in the formation of the social realities in which they participate" (p. 4). In her study of Asian American communities in the United States, Wong (2004) asserts that engagement with music allows for Asian American diasporic communities to "imbricate agency" (p. 7). Arguing that music "'speaks' with considerable power and subtlety as a discourse of difference" (p. 3), Wong discusses the role of music with relation to agency for post-colonial Asian Americans. Particularly, jazz discourse maintains the American mindset of a black/white racial binary to the exclusion of other minority communities within this discourse. She asserts that Asian American musicians throughout multiple communities negotiate an identity within a broader culture where assimilation is masked under a nationalistic idea of what it means to be "American." For example, Americans' view of jazz within a black/white racial binary results in the erasure of jazz

from any other ethnic groups, or as Wong (2004) states, “any other kind of jazz simply isn’t” (p. 171). Chinese Panamanians challenge East Asian and Panamanian cultural binaries by creating soundscapes that contain musics typically not heard alongside one another. Like the Asian Americans with whom Wong researches, the Chinese diaspora in Panama take mainstream Spanish-music genres and incorporate them into their sonic environments to form a unique identity that displays their experiences as both Chinese and as Panamanians. This Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity is expressed through musical experiences and allows them to feel emotionally connected to the country they live within.

Within the Chinese diaspora in Panama, notions of belonging and diasporic citizenship emerge as especially important. Anthropologist Lok Siu (2005) argues for the importance of the affective nature of Panamanian citizenship, the personal and emotional experience of being Panamanian, as well as the need to feel welcome and included as a member of Panamanian society. With the competition between the PRC and Taiwanese governments, which I will explore more fully in chapter 2, Siu (2005) addresses the need for Chinese Panamanians to feel a sense of “belonging” from the Panamanian government. Moreover, feminist scholars such as Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) and Rhacel Parreñas (2001) argue for the notion of belonging, which stresses the “process of forming affinities, affiliations, and solidarities in community formation” (p. 10). Siu (2005) states:

> Diasporic citizenship hence describes the processes by which diasporic subjects experience and practice cultural and social belonging amid shifting geopolitical circumstances and webs of transnational relations. (p. 5)

Chinese diasporic citizenship illustrates the struggle for Chinese Panamanian community members to feel investment and pride in the Panamanian nation, as if they have ownership and

have equal representation, enabling them to enact social change and express agency, thus reflecting Siu's (2005) argument regarding the "affective dimensions of citizenship" (p. 10). Chapter 2 situates the Chinese Panamanian diaspora through experiences of marginalization that resulted in feelings of emotional rejection by Panamanian society.

The supercultures of the PRC and Taiwan and their conflicted relations among the Chinese Panamanian diaspora are important aspects in shaping Chinese Panamanian identity. Prior to the United States relinquishment of the Panama Canal in 1999, Panama had already established diplomatic relations with Taiwan. International studies scholar John F. Cooper (2013) states that Taiwan's diplomatic relations with many Central American countries arose from these nations' lack of "any motivation for establishing relations with Beijing" (p. 213). As demonstrated through Siu's (2005) discussion of the affective dimensions of citizenship, belonging provides Chinese Panamanians a means of security when dealing with this transnational conflict. Acceptance and representation by the Panamanian government helps them to make sense of their place as Panamanians and Chinese by giving them something they can influence.

With Taiwan's influence on the diasporic experience in Panama, Chinese Panamanians feel a strong connection to their homelands and maintain these relationships through their engagement with popular culture and expression of agency through music. According to Mark Slobin (1992), "people are often driven by a mixture of memory and desire in their choice of musics" (p. 55). Through the desire to imagine memories of "home" through music, they create spaces where Chinese identities can be expressed. However, even though the Chinese maintain deep nostalgic sentiments about their homeland, they also deeply connect with their lives in Panama. Due to this dual sentiment, *Chinos*, the term Chinese Panamanians regularly use to refer

to themselves, acknowledges their partial belonging and acceptance. They must actively negotiate between identity and what Siu (2005) calls one's "understandings of 'home' and 'community'" (p. 11). In this sense, people must distinguish between whether or not Panama represents home or just a community away from China. The Chinese diaspora in Panama shares an identity created through experiences of struggle for their own representation and belonging within Panama.

Music experiences among the Chinese diaspora of Panama reflect generational differences. Ethnomusicologist Su Zheng (2010) examines the generational distinctions within Chinese diasporic experience within the United States. Discussing formation of an Asian American cultural identity, Zheng states that the musical stylistic movements of older generations of Asian Americans are consistently being challenged, or even "disqualified" as new immigrants continue to enter the United States. This is also true in Panama, as new genres of popular music replace older, more traditionally based genres. Within the United States, Zheng (2010) argues for the existence of multiple senses of cultural belonging:

> What we see today is a heightened, evolving, and transformative Asian American consciousness entangled with an intense sense and sensibility of multiple cultural belongings and transnational alternative subjectivities. (p. 59)

By claiming multiple senses of cultural belonging, Zheng problematizes the belief that all groups with social and political identities will produce a single distinct style of cultural expression. For East Asians in the United States, factors of age, gender, and migration dates impact the expressive forms of the diaspora, and display a form of the changing same around shared identity struggles. According to Zheng (2010), struggles include racism toward the Chinese in the form of exclusion acts, violence, and "structural discrimination" (p. 44).

Music experience plays a significant role in the formation of diasporic identities. Thomas Turino (2004) argues that music contains a "large number of parameters occurring simultaneously" (p. 17). Rhythms, meters, modes, instrumentations, texts, and many other factors contain individual meanings for those who engage with it. The extra-musical signification of musical aspects serves to both express identity and represent deeply felt cultural values. Within my study, music engagement includes body language, personal reflection, and articulation of sentiments that are not always explicitly stated. The semiotics within all aspects of music making, including the act of listening, are paramount to the paralinguistic understandings present in diasporic identifications. For my Panamanian collaborators, listening to music from the PRC and Taiwan becomes iconic, unifying members of the Chinese Panamanian community.

Amid the Chinese diaspora in Panama, most of the music making experience comes from listening to it; they experience music and express identity through the act of listening to recordings in Chinese languages. Dale Olsen's (2004) account of East Asian culture within a Latin American context addresses the concept of active and passive music making, which are both important for identity formation. Olsen (2004) defines active and passive music making through examples of the Nikkei Japanese diaspora in South America. He explains:

> Singing Naichi-Japanese songs in Japanese and Okinawan-Japanese songs in Okinawan, playing Japanese musical instruments, and dancing Japanese dances are forms of active music making, while listening to Japanese music and viewing Japanese videos of music and dance are forms of passive music making. (p. 5)

Olsen makes clear that the act of music making through listening asserts diasporic identity just as much as performance. This is especially true within the Chinese Panamanian community. Since

they lack venues that consistently feature live Chinese language music, listening occurs primarily in the home and in the workplace.

Within Panama, there is a clear exchange for the diasporic Chinese community between Panama and China, which continues to shape their experiences and identities. According to Néstor García Canclini (1995), sociocultural study should focus "not [on] hybridity but the processes of hybridization" (p. xxvii). For Chinese Panamanians, technology and the act of listening to music contribute to the process of hybridization and uses Chinese popular music as its defining feature. From these experiences, they express their hybrid identities as Chinese and Panamanian. The process of hybridization continues through emerging Chinese Panamanian musicians such as Brenda Lau, a Chinese Panamanian singer, whom I will discuss further in chapter 5. Through hybridization Chinese Panamanians negotiate their double consciousness through an attempt to combine the two different forces. Performing fieldwork in Panama meant understanding the processes of hybridization expressed through global musical flows, flows that extend to both the PRC and Taiwan.

Methodology and Scope

Fieldwork for this ethnography took place over the course of a month during late summer in 2014. Much of the data comes from a series of interviews with Chinese Panamanian in the Panama City Chinatown mall of El Dorado. The women I worked with provided significant information about the ways in which media technologies are used to explore Chinese culture and music. Additionally, informant responses demonstrate the importance of feeling connected to both Taiwan and Panama. These informants substantiate the meaningfulness and accuracy of my research. Within this research, my cousin Jackeline Lascano and University of Tennessee

Knoxville colleague Carlos Hernandez Baez assisted me with all transcriptions and translations of personal communication.

As I explored El Dorado mall, I specifically sought young, adult Chinese Panamanian collaborators for my research. Throughout this thesis, I focus primarily on the hybrid identity of Chinese Panamanians within the youth culture, as opposed to older generations of the community. Specifically, my research examines Chinese Panamanians between the ages of 18 and 30, the stage in life where "young people…strive to find their own spaces, make their own choices, and form their own identities, while at the same time deterred by certain norms, rules, regulations, and social forces," as noted by sociologists Min Zhou and Jennifer Lee (2004, p. 2). Chinese Panamanian youth subvert Panamanian norms by incorporating Chinese language popular music through digital technologies. Sociologist Andy Bennett (2000) argues that popular music "serve[s] as an effective platform for the delivery of…challenges" to youth populations (p. 40). In El Dorado, the use of Chinese language popular music delivers the challenges of their double consciousness, marginalization, and status as "outsiders" to the norms of Panamanian society. Additionally, my research also reflects the significant connection between youth culture and shopping centers. Located in the center of the Chinatown, El Dorado demonstrates urban planning scholars Shenglin E. Chang and Willow Lung-Amam's (2010) argument that Asian malls "serve as important destinations for the expression and reflection of Taiwanese transnational youth identity and culture" (p. 30). Further, Chang and Lung-Amam (2010) explain that youth identity is "most often dictated by popular media and consumer culture" (p. 30). Likewise, El Dorado mall enables Chinese Panamanian youth to shape their identities by exploring popular media from China within a hybrid Chinese Panamanian context.

To find research participants, I entered a variety of different stores throughout the mall. In many of the stores, young Chinese Panamanians could easily be found working the counters, while older family members, notably men, could occasionally be seen in back offices. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I initiated conversation by asking store workers if they spoke English. In almost every instance, the answer was "no." At this point, Jackeline would mediate as translator for the rest of the conversation. A few times during my research, we encountered individuals who only spoke Chinese languages and we could not continue. After a few unsuccessful experiences, we developed a method for beginning interviews that introduced my research. Interestingly, only the women I interviewed participated in my research. One young man we attempted to interview, who also happened to speak English, would only participate if he were not required to sign a consent form, which we could not accommodate due to Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. I postulate that the willingness of women to participate in my research, in contrast to the men with whom I attempted to work, comes from a historical separation of labor in Asian diasporas, as explored by sociologist Steven C. McKay (2007). McKay (2007) notes that "[r]ecent migration scholars have…focus[ed] almost exclusively on women," a result of the "sexual division of labor and the gender labeling of different jobs and occupations" (pp. 64 & 66). Likewise, since women were predominantly the face and voice of the stores, it makes sense that they would be more willing to communicate with me.

Inspired by ethnographies such as those by Aaron Fox (2004) and Matt Sakakeeny (2013), this research emphasizes interaction with research participants on a personal level. Interviews were designed to feel relaxing, without the pressure of a formal interview. To do this, I shared information about myself and my own background and personal experience while asking my informants to share their stories. In the same way that Sakakeeny (2013) evaluates

how his informants' experiences "relate to macroeconomic and political forces" (p. 4), I also relate the concerns of the people I worked with to issues of economics of music consumption and politics of the PRC and Taiwan supercultures. My research demonstrates the important connections among the Chinese Panamanian diaspora, global technocultural networks, and exchange of music, discovered through these personal interactions.

My interviews follow James Spradley's (1979) example by using what he calls "descriptive questions" and "structural questions," or questions that ask interviewees to describe certain events or aspects of their lives in their own words (p. 60). Open-ended questions allowed the informants to freely discuss their musical experiences in the ways that they found to be most important, allowing me to deduce the musical phenomena most meaningful in their lives. Throughout the process, my goal was to make the interviewees as comfortable as possible, while acknowledging that many of these interview sessions took place while they were working. To assure informants' relaxation, most conversations began with brief questions about their families and personal background. For example, when we began talking with Patricia, seeing Patricia's young son in the shop, we were able to introduce Jackeline's own son to the conversation. After Patricia and Jackeline discussed their experiences as mothers, the conversation transitioned to how Patricia used Chinese music to instill Chineseness in her son, as detailed earlier. In other situations, we started with general discussions about music; I asked potential collaborators what types of music they enjoyed listening to regularly. At this point, I would narrow the conversation to specifically address Chinese music in Panama, asking how collaborators discovered new music and what playback devices they used to play it. However, interviewees still took time to become settled, especially with the audio recorder beside us.

In addition to conducting fieldwork that utilizes personal relationships and descriptive questions for interviews, this ethnography upholds the ethnomusicological tendency toward reflexivity. Michelle Kisliuk's (2008) reflexive ethnography realizes that "we get to know other people by making *ourselves* known to *them,* and through them to know ourselves again, in a continuous cycle" (p. 187, emphasis original). I attempt to understand my position among the Chinese Panamanian diaspora being studied and to represent these positions in my ethnography, echoing the description of reflexive ethnography given by Timothy J. Cooley and Gregory Barz (2008). In the context of Panama, and next to my darker-skinned cousin, my position as a white male with limited Spanish-speaking ability caused initial hesitation. As a university educated researcher from the United States in a country where American interaction has been historically dominating, my hegemonic status situated me, at first impression, as an interloper. Self-awareness of this status informed my interviews and helped me work to establish my presence as an equal, rather than as a representation of the United States' dominating presence.

Fortunately, the presence of my cousin helped detract from my presence as a light-skinned American male. Both my mother and Jackeline's father were born in Río Abajo, Panama, a poor subdivision of Panama City with a high concentration of Caribbean descended community members, specifically from Jamaica and Barbados. Like the Chinese in Panama, black populations faced a history of marginalization and racist restrictions from the Panamanian government. In her appearance and her fluency with the language, Jackeline better reflected a marginalized Panamanian community; her presence during my research helped legitimate my honest intentions.

Finally, analysis of informant data draws from Clifford Geertz's (1973) concept of interpretive anthropology and "thick description" through participant observation. Geertz

considers more than just superficial behavior; thick description looks "at the symbolic dimensions of social action" (p. 30). My ethnography utilizes Geertz's methodology by analyzing cultural significance of music as a marker of identity and transmitter of culture for the Chinese diaspora of Panama. Thick description proves necessary for capturing deeper meanings behind musical experience for the Chinese in Panama. Beyond just Chinese Panamanians, it is especially useful in identifying the importance of music for individuals.

Review of Literature

Since the late 1980s, through social scientists such as Gabriel Sheffer (1986) and William Safran (1991), who established the distinction between diasporas and migrant communities, interest in diaspora studies has increasingly come into scholarly focus. This focus directly relates to the arrival of what Turino (2004) calls the "era of transnationalism and global culture" (p. 3). Through war, colonialism, and general displacement, groups of people now live in communities separated from their respective ancestral homelands. Due to the possibilities of migration, diaspora studies provide large amounts of data about how groups of people form identities when living abroad. Distinguishing diasporic migration from immigration, James Clifford (1997) stresses the importance of diasporas maintaining "important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere" (p. 250). As such, my research utilizes texts about diaspora, history, art communities, and cultural politics in both Panama and the broader Latin American context. In this section, I provide a brief discussion of the critical and foundational writings necessary for my research in Chinese musical identity within its Panamanian diaspora.

Martin Stokes (1997) establishes the construction of identity for diasporic communities with regard to music. Like Deborah Wong (2004), he emphasizes the political importance of

music as an expression of agency by stating that it provides an "arena for pushing back boundaries" (p. 22). Stokes asserts, "issues of colonialism, domination and violence have to be taken into account" (p. 8). Through this pushing back, music becomes an expression of resistance. Stokes claims:

> A sense of identity can be put into play through music by performing it, dancing to it, listening to it or even thinking about it. (p. 24)

One does not have to perform music in order to create an identity through it. This ethnography demonstrates the agency of Chinese Panamanians in asserting their identities as both Chinese and Panamanian through active engagement with music from the PRC and Taiwan. By the very act of listening to recordings and media, this diasporic community shapes and maintains their hybrid identity.

Timothy Taylor (2003) argues that globalization is not a new phenomenon. In fact, he states that the concept is "old news" (p. 66). Instead, he proposes the concept of glocalization, a term that "emphasizes the extent to which the local and the global are no longer distinct" (p. 67). The concept of glocalization helps me situate the experience of a global Chinese music through the localized lenses of the Chinese Panamanian community. Beyond just the localized meanings within the global phenomena, glocalization also helps us to understand the use of music as a form of resistance and agency. For the Chinese in Panama, this agency enables members of the community to reinforce their hybrid Chinese and Panamanian identities. Likewise, Deborah Wong's (2003; 2004) notions of the musical manifestations of agency inform my analysis of the Chinese experience in Panama, as discussed earlier.

Through the observable symbolism present throughout El Dorado, Chinese Panamanians continually reaffirm their hybrid identities. The musical soundscapes emerge as a notable marker

of this hybridization of identity and local definitions of place. Musicologist Sheila Whiteley (2005) notes:

> Both as a creative process and as a form of consumption music plays an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, in the way in which people define their relationship to local, everyday surroundings. (p. 2)

Whiteley's (2005) observation rings especially true in El Dorado, where the visual and auditory experiences mark a persistent narrative of Chinese Panamanian identity. In this sense, the individual shops represent "places," which geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) defines as "space" that "becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (p. 6). In contrast, Tuan (1977) defines "space" as an abstract notion that "is given by the ability to move…[and] can be variously experienced as the relative location of objects or places" (p. 12). Using Tuan's notions, chapter 3 situates the Chinese Panamanian musical experience through their relationship to the significance of El Dorado stores as "place."

The experience of shopping and working within El Dorado reveals the construction of acoustic territories and soundscapes. Coined by composer and environmentalist R. Murray Schafer (1994), the notion of soundscapes intended to unify studies relating to "acoustics…and the structural analysis of language and music," among other things (pp. 3-4). In other words, Schafer sought to examine music and sound research with regard to marked territories. Specifically, Chinese Panamanian musical activity within El Dorado results in an acoustic space that permeates the Chinatown. In situating the community through its use of audioarchitecture, I utilize the research of R. Murray Schafer (1994), Brandon LaBelle (2010), and Jonathan Sterne (2003; 2012), who examine the relationships between sound and marked territories. Specifically, LaBelle examines acoustic territories, noting that sound "reroutes the making of identity by

creating a greater and more suggestive weave between self and surrounding" (p. xxi). Similarly, Chinese Panamanians in El Dorado construct sonic environments that interweave their notions of identity and their surroundings.

The El Dorado mall, like the Mall of America in Sterne's (2003) analysis, reflects the inseparability of sound and environment within shopping centers; however, marked differences exist between the two malls. The stores in the Mall of America are mostly corporations and major international retailers. In contrast, El Dorado features independently owned stores. Musically, the Mall of America relies heavily on programmed music to situate the consumer identities of the various stores, ensuring that customers know what store they are in through the sonic experience. In El Dorado mall, however, most stores feature Chinese language music alongside Spanish language music. Though the music serves a similar intention of encouraging customers to make purchases, it also intends to assert a Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity.

In his seminal discussion of acoustic spaces and territories, Brandon LaBelle (2010) argues that acoustic spaces, in some cases, are a "disruptive spatiality," sites of annoyance and outrage (p. xxii). In my own observations of certain stores within El Dorado, these disruptive spatialities manifest in shops marketed towards a younger generation and are distinguished by their loud, percussive music, reflective of the youth culture I discussed earlier. However, LaBelle continues by noting that these sites of disruptive spatiality also present "important opportunities for dynamic sharing – *to know the other*" (p. xxii, emphasis original). Dynamic sharing becomes important for communities of people wishing to assert themselves within a broader society. For the situation in El Dorado, an acoustic space consisting of Chinese and Panamanian music and language demonstrates LaBelle's notion of dynamic sharing by exposing the Chinese *other* to the

rest of Panamanian society. Additionally, this sharing also represents a firm stance on how Chinese Panamanians wish to be perceived by the society they live within.

Much research examines the ways in which technologies and technoculture necessitate the use of popular media for cultural expression and the formation of identity. Janet L. Sturman's (2003) analysis of Colombian popular music, Tong Soon Lee's (2003) discussion of the Islamic Call to Prayer in Singapore, and Peter Manuel's (1993) research about cassette culture in India significantly contribute to the understanding of the use of technologies in the Chinese Panamanian community through their discussions of identity, space, and commodification with regard to music. In the same way that Tim Taylor (2003) demonstrates local meaning in global musics, I use the works of these authors to situate the uses of contemporary technologies within the Chinese diasporic community. So common is the technologically mediated hybrid musical experience within El Dorado, the experience has become one of "habit," to use Turino's (2004) term; Turino (2004) states that "[s]ubjectivity and identity comprise trajectories of habits…" (p. 9). Further, Turino (2004) argues that social identities "are the result of deeply imbedded habit which can remain outside of focal awareness for artists and audiences" (Ibid.). Participating in activity within the El Dorado shopping center, many Chinese Panamanians associate the area with a hybrid identity as a part of their day-to-day lifestyle, rather than intentionally creating it. This will be especially important in Chapter 4, as I seek to demonstrate the power of technologies in the Chinese Panamanian experience.

Both Lok Siu (2005) and Berta P. Chen (2010; 2014) provide context for my discussion of the Chinese in Panama. Chen's (2010) history of Chinese presence in Panama demonstrates the hardships and struggles of the Chinese immigrants during the 19th and 20th centuries. This oppression proves essential for understanding their experiences, particularly compared to the

black Atlantic experience, previously discussed through the literature of Paul Gilroy (1993). Demonstrated through Lok Siu's (2005) ethnography, this history of marginalization in Latin America situates the Chinese today. It also shows the ways in which the Chinese diaspora of Panama maintain deep sentiments towards the PRC and Taiwan and form a diasporic citizenship within their country. Most importantly, these deep sentiments manifest within the diasporic community through the process of localization and the reiteration of a Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity.

Chapter Overview

The subsequent chapters situate the Chinese Panamanian experience through their conflicted histories, creation of spaces and places, uses of technologies and media in musical experience, and specific cases studies. Throughout, I frame the Chinese diaspora in Panama through the idea of a *double consciousness* and demonstrate how the Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity is constructed and maintained through technological engagement with music. In Chapter 2, through the lens of anti-anti-essentialism, to establish commonalities and differences, I address the long history of Chinese migration within a larger Latin American context. To do this, I explore current migration patterns and consider how conflicts between the PRC and Taiwan manifest themselves in the Chinese diaspora of Panama. Additionally, this chapter addresses the vestigial elements of U.S. neocolonialism to explore the ways in which Chinese Panamanians must navigate the complex and multiple influences on their livelihood.

Chapter 3 positions Chinese Panamanian experiences through the notion of the soundscape, heard through the Chinese Panamanian construction of an acoustic territory within El Dorado. In this chapter, I also utilize the concepts of space and place. By establishing the ways in which diasporic communities locate themselves within the world around them, I

demonstrate a deeper understanding of the Chinese Panamanian experience. I explore these concepts by examining the primary sites in which musical activity takes place, with particular attention to young adults within the community. I will show the significance of these sites in the community's expression of agency and show how within the soundscapes, Chinese Panamanians create spaces where they can freely express themselves.

In Chapter 4, I examine the specific uses of digital technologies in the Chinese diaspora of Panama. The variety of formats for musical experience through media players such as smart phones and streaming services, shows the powerful presence of technology and its necessity for Chinese Panamanian musical expression. Through an understanding of the ways in which Chinese Panamanians engage with technologies, I will show how local meanings are inscribed in the globally available music of the PRC and Taiwan. Additionally, this chapter emphasizes the importance of technology on identity formation and maintenance within the community.

Further, chapter 4 ties specific examples from my ethnographic research to the previously discussed notions of places and spaces, technoculture, and agency through music. For example, Patricia's role as "culture bearer" provides insight into the ways in which parents pass down culture and tradition to their children. Luz, on the other hand, as a Chinese Panamanian born in Panama, demonstrates the connection to her past through musical experience. Her situation shows how technology provides a means for diasporic youth to engage with their heritage.

Finally, chapter 5 concludes with a thorough discussion of the Chinese Panamanian experience in Panama as exemplified in my ethnography. I explore the emergence of new Chinese Panamanian hybrid identities as demonstrated in the music of popular Panamanian singer Brenda Lau. By singing in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish, Brenda Lau expresses pride in her dual identity as both Chinese and Panamanian. I also provide final thoughts on the

music and identity of the Chinese diaspora in Panama, noting the significance of technology in situating contemporary youth communities. Additionally, this chapter explores the possibilities of continued research within the Chinese Panamanian diaspora regarding gender, general Chinese studies, and the application of my research within another Panamanian Chinatown located in the Colón province. Ultimately, I argue recorded music and media technologies enable Chinese communities within Panama to shape and maintain their hybrid identities, connect to distant homelands of the PRC and Taiwan, and express pride in their Chineseness within a Panamanian context.

Chapter II
From China to Panama:
Migration, Acclimation, and Hybridity

The moment I hear
We've entered the port,
I'm all ready:
my belongings wrapped in a bundle.
Who would have expected joy to become sorrow?

-Excerpt from *Jinshan ge ji* (Songs of Gold Mountain)
(Hom [Translator], 1987, p.75)

Written in the early 1910s, this epigraph comes from *Jinshan ge ji* (Songs of Gold Mountain), an anthology of Chinese folk rhymes and literature developed within the early Chinatowns of San Francisco. Organized, translated, and annotated by Marlon K. Hom (1987) from the original collection, the literature demonstrates the migration experience of Chinese diasporic communities. Chinese migration experiences of the 19th and 20th centuries are especially important for highlighting the struggles of Chinese Panamanians to feel belonging in Panamanian society. In this chapter, I analyze the Chinese situation in Panama through Paul Gilroy's (1993) notion of a collective identity discussed in the previous chapter. Similar to Lok Siu (2005), I demonstrate "how these narratives actually constitute and reproduce a collective understanding of diasporic Chinese citizenship, a form of belonging that is contingent on a combination of constraints and choices" (p. 88). Notably, in this chapter I emphasize the role music choices have historically played in providing expressive outlets for Chinese migrants, important for establishing the significance of music technologies and individual agency that I discuss in chapter 4.

Inspired by Hom's (1987) collection, I create an imagined soundscape of the past to demonstrate the extension of current music practice. Though my ethnographic research revealed no mention of a history of oral music performance, I argue for its historical presence by

examining texts that emerged from other Chinese diasporic communities who shared similar circumstances and migration experiences. I am particularly influenced by historian Richard Cullen Rath's (2003) exploration of early American soundscapes. By "recovering the sounded worlds" of the past, as phrased by Rath (2003, p. 2), we can better understand the importance of the emergence of music technologies for the contemporary Chinese Panamanian community in chapter 4.

When groups of people, in this case the Chinese, migrate to new places, cultural values and ideologies also travel with them. James Clifford (1997) posits, "Travel…denotes a range of material, special practices that produce knowledges, stories, traditions, comportments, musics, books, diaries, and other cultural expressions" (p. 35). Examples of such forms of expression include Chinese food, Buddhist and Chinese folk religion, and Chinese languages spoken in the home. In El Dorado, I encountered many different Chinese restaurants that served what they claimed to be "*auténtica comida china*" (authentic Chinese food). One restaurant I encountered, Restaurante Jumbo, located just outside of the mall, included menu items marked as specifically Chinese (Figures 2.1., 2.2., and 2.3.). Cultural icons such as these help establish the Chinese dimensions of their multiple identities.

Specifically, music emerges as a significant asset to migrant populations. Ethnomusicologist John Baily (2006) argues that music, as well as film and dance, "are particularly interesting since they not only reflect but also inform migrants' attitudes in a way that does not appear to be true of other types of production that we might want to call 'cultural'" (pp. 167-168). Additionally, Baily (2006) argues that the way music fits within the migrant experience is also deeply affected by migration circumstances (p. 172). As demonstrated through the opening epigraph, these experiences were not always as positive as the migrants originally

intended. Likewise, the Chinese communities in Panama have carried their own musical traditions and continue to experience them as a result of their own migratory circumstances.

The Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity that I found in my ethnographic fieldwork comes as a result of the historical struggles and global situations of conflict, underscored by Gilroy's notions of anti-anti-essentialism and double consciousness. Due to suffering within their homeland, many Chinese left China to find work and settlement in Latin America. Eventually establishing a community in Panama, the Chinese diaspora faced struggles of marginalization and oppression. In chapter 3, I discuss how Chinatowns emerged as a result of such social and economic hardships. Even today, political turmoil between the PRC and Taiwanese supercultures deeply impact the Chinese diaspora of Panama. The PRC and Taiwan represent perfect examples of Slobin's (1993) notion of the superculture as overarching, international powers that are present in the lives of Chinese Panamanians in both ideology and in practice,. Within the diaspora, these supercultures largely influence the Chinese communities, resulting in conflicts regarding community identity and political affiliations. Thus, the Chinese populations in Panama situate their lives through their history of struggle that began in the 19th century and continues through today.

Migration to Latin America

Several significant socio-economic issues, including war, overpopulation, and political conflicts in China resulted in large waves of emigration to other countries. In 1842 the British defeated China in the First Opium War, a war imposed on the Chinese by the British in their attempts to force trade relations with China (Pan, 1990, p. 43). As a result of the Opium War and building socio-economic tensions within the country, civil unrest began to erupt in China. Chinese studies scholar Lynn Pan (1990) states that villages had become excessively poor and

overcrowded in the 19th century due to China's substantial escalation in population to 450 million people (p. 43). Additionally, the government continued to levy high taxes that were managed by greedy officials, while neglecting public works and the military. In the words of Pan (1990), the result was "destitution, popular demoralization, corruption, apathy, and the breakdown of public order and personal morality" (p. 43). Chen (2010) argues that the Ching dynasty (1644-1912) failed to meet the needs of its growing population by ruling with a code of laws that had existed for 2,000 years (p. 19). Due to these socio-economic hardships, many Chinese sought refuge outside of the country.

In addition to factors that drove people to leave China, economic opportunities brought the Chinese to Latin America. Pan (1990) points out that "[m]ass emigration from China, like mass emigration anywhere, required the juncture of bad times at home with good times abroad" (p. 53). Increasing British presence in East Asia brought about new possibilities for Chinese migration and work. At the beginning of the 1800s, Western empires began to prohibit the trade of slaves, initiated by Spain in 1820, followed by Great Britain in 1833, and Portugal in 1835 (Chen, 2010, p. 16). Anthropologist Lucy M. Cohen (1971) notes that Western empires sought new systems for cheap labor within their Latin American colonies (p. 311). For the British, the solution came from the use of Chinese laborers. Chen (2010) states that the British "[*i*]*niciaron el tráfico migratorio de cientos de miles de chinos, atrayéndolos con promesas falsas*" (initiated the migratory traffic of hundreds of thousands of Chinese by luring them with false promises) (p. 16).[1] The British gave these Chinese migrants the derogatory name of *coolies*. The term coolie has three possible origins. One idea maintains that it comes from the Cantonese term *koo li*, meaning bitterness and strength (a phrase often used for unqualified workers) (Chen, 2010, pp. 16-17). Other scholars argue that the word comes from the Hindu word *qûlî*, meaning contracted

[1] All translations from secondary sources are my own.

worker (Ibid.). Others believe that it derives from the name of a South Asian aboriginal group known as the Kuli, the first contracted workers from Asia (Pan, 1990, p. 45). All of these definitions attest to the fact that landowners associated the Chinese primarily with labor, marking them as "Others." By subcategorizing all Chinese as "coolies," contractors exploited the Chinese much more easily.

The use of the Chinese as cheap labor began a history of Chinese migration to Latin America. At the end of the slave trade, free blacks no longer wished to work for their former owners. Thus, plantations holders looked to Africa, Europe, and Asia for people willing to work. Using Cuba as an example, Latin American scholar Eugenio Chang-Rodriguez (1958) states, "the Spanish…decided to send an agent to China to contract for Chinese *colonos*" (p. 379). As a more affordable alternative for slaves, Spain began hiring Chinese workers as indentured servants in order to develop their lands. Pan (1990) argues that for landowners in Latin America, the Chinese "strong physique, their eagerness to make money, their history of toil from infancy, [and] their relative freedom…from religious inhibitions" made them preferable to South Asians as workers (p. 46). Hiring under dishonest schemes, agents working for the plantation holders offered contracted workers a wage and then charged them for travel, food, and clothing until the only money left barely provided a living (Chen, 2014, p. 11). Though not guaranteed, after completing eight to ten years of work, the Chinese laborers could return to China (Chang-Rodriguez, 1958, p. 379). However, most signed new contracts and continued their indentured servitude, what Joseph L. Scott (1967) calls "a slave system" (p. 177). Accordingly, Chen (2010) posits, "*Se estima que entre un tercio y dos tercios de los embarcados, se sentían desilusionados y descontentos con su situación*" (one- to two-thirds of the Chinese arrivals were disillusioned

and discontent with their situation) (p. 17). The system began to be known as *la trata amarilla*, or "the yellow trade" (Chen, 2010, p. 18).

Chinese Migrant Musical History: *Muk'yu* and Story-Telling

The most important music genre of the Chinese diaspora during the 19th century narrates both the positives and the negatives of the migrant experience. Consisting of rhymed texts, these narrative songs, known as *muk'yu* (wooden fish songs), traveled with the Chinese from rural areas within the region of Guangdong to North and South America (Zheng, 1992, p. 165). Without an ability to carry instruments from China during the "yellow trade," migrants to Latin America would have performed music vocally. Since many of the Latin American migrants traveled from Guangdong, where the tradition was especially strong, the *muk'yu* genre would have been performed. In her discussion of *muk'yu* songs, Zheng (1992) states that the music features "stories drawn from national or local history, myths, legends, and folk tales" and may include instruments or multiple singers (pp. 166-167). The lengths of the texts vary greatly; some are so long that it can take anywhere from hours to days to perform in full. Instead of performing the longer *muk'yu* at length, Zheng (1992) explains that many performers employ a practice called *zhaijin* (extracting the beautiful), where they perform or publish smaller excerpts (p. 167).

The excerpt highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, like many of the other examples in Hom's (1987) collection, would have been sung and passed on through the oral tradition in the form of *muk'yu.* Like the Chinese in Panama, this Californian Chinese community faced hardships and expressed the struggle through music. One primary difference between contemporary Chinese Panamanian musical expression and *muk'yu* performers is the inclusion of digital technologies, where Chinese Panamanians use recorded music to highlight their hybrid identities and imply their histories of marginalization indirectly. On the other hand, oral music

traditions rely on technologies of memory in order to create a communal memory of shared Chinese histories. Likewise, Lok Siu (2005) posits, "historical memory enabled [Chinese Panamanians] to establish commonality based on their shared experiences of political violence" (p. 146). These shared cultural memories help to shape what international studies scholar Benedict Anderson (1983) calls an "imagined" community, where "members…will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 15).

Emphasizing the struggles faced through the migrant experience, *muk'yu* texts incorporate various, individualized scenarios. Hom's (1987) collection of possible *muk'yu* provides scenarios about immigration blues, stranded travelers, estranged wives, nostalgia, and opium addictions, among others. Zheng (1992) laments the genre's lack of scholarly attention prior to the late 1970s. My fieldwork uncovered no mention of Panama-specific *muk'yu* or contemporary performers of it. I firmly believe, however, that more extended research amongst the Chinese in Panama would uncover migrant experiences in the form of these narrative songs, even if only amid much older generations. By examining the texts of *muk'yu* discovered in the United States, I suggest that the similarities between the hardships of the migrants would result in analogous form of cultural expression exemplified in the following excerpt from Hom's (1987) translated collection:

> *Wooden barracks, all specially built;*
>
> *It's clear they're detention cells.*
>
> *We Chinese enter this country and suffer*
>
> *All sorts of autocratic restrictions made at whim.* (p. 78)

Similarly to this Chinese migrant's song about his experiences upon arrival in America, the Chinese who migrated to Latin America also faced autocratic restrictions and cruel treatment.

In addition to the harsh treatment of the Chinese during the 19th century, *muk'yu* texts also reference the hardships of being away from loved ones left behind in China and the struggle to provide for them. Hom (1987) refers to these songs as the "lamentations of stranded sojourners," stating that "[t]heir sense of duty to their families back in China, who depended upon them for survival, became an ever-present reminder, pushing them to the edge of desperation" (pp. 91-92). This exerpt from Hom's (1987) collection represents these struggles of Chinese migrants to provide for their families:

I have walked to the very ends of the earth,

A dusty, windy journey.

I've toiled and I'm worn out, all for a miserable lot.

Nothing is ideal when I am down and out.

I think about it day and night –

Who can save a fish out of water?

From far away, I worry for my parents, my wife, my boy:

Do they still have enough firewood, rice, salt, and cooking oil? (p. 99)

Texts such as these demonstrate a struggle that goes beyond the cruelty inflicted upon Chinese migrants by their very existence within the West; the songs reflect economic hardships at home as well as Chinese migrants' need to sustain their families back in China. Their arrival in the Americas was marked by a willingness to face mistreatment and accept poor wages in the face of familial duty. In the next sections, I further explicate the Chinese experience in Latin America, specifically addressing the arrival of Chinese migrants to Panama, in order to emphasize the

historically based feelings of rejection experienced by contemporary Chinese Panamanians from Panamanian society.

Arrival in Panama

The history of Chinese presence in Panama provides an explanation for Chinese Panamanians' lack of a sense of belonging from Panamanian society, thus demonstrating a need to assert their hybrid identities. Through the following historical narratives, I reiterate Gilroy's (1993) argument for a collective identity created through a shared history of struggle. Additionally, the struggles I explore reinforce the need for Chinese Panamanians to exert agency in shaping their identities, similar to Wong's (2004) discussion of agency for Asian Americans.

The building of the Panama railroad led to the first instance of Chinese immigrants on Panamanian soil and eventually led to a steady flow of migration. Regardless of the rampant discrimination, the Isthmus of Panama drew in Chinese laborers by promoting new jobs for immigrants in search of wealth. These new jobs emerged within the context of the California Gold Rush (1848-1855), which created a demand for a reliable mode of transportation of gold between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of the United States. As a route for easy transport, Panama became a focal point. Since the isthmus was considered safer than traveling through the United States continent and quicker than traveling by ocean around Cape Horn of South America, American wealth-seekers used Panama as a means to traverse oceans (McGuinness, 2008, pp. 17-18). In order to help transport newly accumulated wealth from coast to coast, the United States organized the construction of a railroad in Panama (Ibid., p. 31). According to Cohen (1971), the railroad would prevent travelers from having to cross the isthmus by mule, a journey that was plagued with dangerous rainforests and a harsh climate (p. 310). The project began in 1850 and initially began with workers from Colombia, the United States, and the Caribbean

(Ibid., p. 311). Due to deaths from accidents and disease, workers from other countries were eventually contracted, including the Chinese, Irish, South Asians, and Jamaicans (Ibid.).

The first major wave of Chinese migrants arrived to Panama as a result of the building of the Panama Railway. In 1846, the Colombian government granted permission for William Aspinwall, John L. Stephens, and Henry Chauncey from the United States to build the first transoceanic railroad (McGuinness, 2008, p. 31). Known then as the Panama Railroad Company, the business contracted Chinese workers from the port of Canton, now known as Guangzhong (Chen, 2010, p. 30). Chen (2010) emphasizes that the first ship began with 300 Chinese passengers and notes that 72 of them died during the journey (Ibid.). Likewise, a second cargo set sail with 521 passengers but arrived with only 425 (Ibid.). With the completion of the railroad in 1855, over 700 officially registered Chinese were working and living in Panama (Chen, 2010, p. 39). Chen (2010) states that Chinese immigrants continued to arrive throughout the following 25 years, where they established themselves in large Panama cities such as Colón and Panama City (Ibid.).

The second major wave of Chinese migration to Panama occurred in the late 19th century with the beginning of Panama Canal construction. Long desired by conquerors as early as 1515, as noted by Chen (2010), France began the canal construction project in 1887 (p. 40). Denied workers by the Chinese imperial court for the harsh treatment of Chinese in years prior, the French used their Chinese colony of Tongking (modern day north Vietnam) to transport 651 workers in order to evade Chinese authorities (Chen, 2010, pp. 40-41). Before 1889, the Chinese population in Panama numbered around 3,000 young adults; between 1889 and 1890, France had recruited from 4,000 to 5,000 new Chinese workers (Ibid., pp. 42-43). By 1894, the French stopped importing workers from China in order to utilize Jamaican workers, considered more

physically capable for the intensity of railroad building and geographically closer (Ibid., p. 43). In 1889, the French control over the canal project failed due to high mortality rates and engineering problems, forcing France to sell control over the project to the United States in 1904 (Greene, 2009, p. 2). By the time the United States began its work on the canal in 1904, Chinese exclusion laws existed in both Panama and the United Sates, thus significantly reducing the number of workers migrating from China (Chen, 2010, pp. 47-49).

A third wave of Chinese migration began in 1976 and continues through today as a result of the Chinese government's relaxation of emigration laws (Chen, 2010, p. 69). With each wave of migration, generations of Chinese immigrants brought with them cultural traditions and values, including their music. The experiences of these communities were far from pleasant and in the following section, I will elaborate on the harsh treatment of the Chinese community throughout Panamanian history, especially important for understanding why the Chinese community in Panama feels a lack of belonging within Panamanian society.

Yellow Peril and Societal Racism

On March 30, 1854, the famous clipper *Sea Witch* arrived to the port in Panama City (Schott, 1967, p. 176). The 192 foot long vessel, that had become famous for its speedy, 97-day journey from New York to San Francisco around Cape Horn, featured towering masts and a figurehead representing a black dragon (Ibid.). Packed with Chinese coolies, Schott (1967) narrates that the ship "was filthy and stank like a slaver" (p. 176). The ship, owned by U.S. Americans Howland and Aspinwall, was commissioned by the railroad company to bring in Canton laborers to Panama as indentured servants (Ibid.). This marked the first instance of Chinese in Panama. Schott (1967) states:

> When they were all ashore, they formed into a long line; and followed by a crowd of curious onlookers, they marched through the city and out the gates on the inland side. Indeed, they presented an odd spectacle. (p. 177)

As Schott (1967) recounts, to onlookers, the "small in stature" men resembled "a weird procession of carnival midgets in their blue pajama-like suits and large conical hats" (p. 177). With their heads bowed, these new migrants joined the already-present Irish workers, whose accession to what Schott (1967) calls the "heady rank of white Anglo-Saxons" made them hostile toward any "people of darker skin and foreign ways" (p. 168).

As the *Sea Witch* account demonstrates, the Chinese experience in Panama has been marred with struggle since their arrival in Panama in 1854. Beginning with their first steps in Panama and up through today, the Chinese in Panama have faced struggles and hardships based around anti-Chinese sentiments, exemplified through a series of laws that limited Chinese humanity. Fearing invasion from the Far East, many countries in the West, including Panama, began to experience "Yellow Peril," which, as Chinese studies scholar Leung Wing-Fai (2014) states, "blends western anxieties about sex, racist fears of the alien other, and the Spenglerian belief that the West will become outnumbered and enslaved by the East" (para. 2). In the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited the immigration of all Chinese laborers (National Archives, 1882). As a "puppet state" of the United States (Woolsey, 1904, p. 97), Panama adopted the exclusion laws of its helpers (Siu, 2005, p.39). Siu (2005) contends that this move came as no surprise considering "substantial public pressure against Chinese immigration and commercial competition had been mounting" within Panama (Ibid.).

Panamanian citizens feared the Chinese due to their already prevalent domination of the retail and grocery trades, established during the late 19th century. In addition to exclusion

policies already in place, this fear of the Chinese generated new laws throughout the 19th century, specifically designed to attack the economic strength of Chinese business owners. For example, historians Marion Wilcox and George E. Rines (1917) note that in 1913, Panama passed a law declaring a head tax on all citizens of Chinese descent "of $250 each for the privilege of living in the Republic" (p. 815). Unable to afford the tax, many among the diaspora feared deportation (New York Times, 1913). Additionally, Panamanian politician and journalist Eric Jackson (2004) states that in 1928, Panama passed a law requiring all Chinese to submit special paperwork in order to become citizens (Para. 14). Since Panamanian law requires that only citizens of Panama may own businesses, laws against Chinese citizenship represented laws against Chinese legal ability to participate in the retail trade.

Conditions for the Chinese in Panama worsened throughout the 20th century. In 1941, then-president Arnulfo Arias Madrid enacted a new constitution that institutionalized "prohibited races," which further restricted the migration of Asians and non-Hispanic blacks (Siu, 2005, p. 114). Siu (2005) relates that in 1928, the new constitution stripped any Chinese-born Panamanian the "right to citizenship and to own certain kinds of businesses" (p. 114). Few options existed for the Chinese in Panama. After becoming a communist nation (1949), China closed its border (1950), thus preventing diasporic Chinese the ability to migrate to what the Chinese considered their "homeland and place of eventual return" (Ibid.). For this reason, many Chinese looked to the United States, which "was gaining hegemonic dominance globally," as a source of protection from the Panamanian government (Ibid., p. 115). Although Arias Madrid's constitution was nullified by 1945, Siu (2005) posits, "the ideological remnants of his policies lingered long after" (p. 116).

Even today, the ideological remnants of Arias' policies remain within existing legislation. Similarly to the way George M. Fredrickson (1988) accuses the United States of societal racism, so too has Panama's history featured racist codes of laws pushed through by a fearful society. The *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People* (2009) claims that Panamanian law still mandates that only citizens may own and operate retail and commercial businesses (para. 13). Though this law no longer excludes Chinese Panamanian citizens, it does exclude any possible new migrants. Since diasporic Chinese have historically succeeded in the retail trade (Ma, 2003, p. 28), these laws appear to specifically target Chinese immigrants.

Throughout my fieldwork, this history of marginalization continued to manifest itself, seen through the country's reaction to issues surrounding the brutal treatment of the Chinese in the past. On August 8, 2014, during my time in Panama and while attending a conference for the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas (ISSCO), I attended a speech given by current President Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez addressing the 100th anniversary of the completion of the Panama Canal and the 160th anniversary of Chinese presence in Panama (See Figures 2.4. and 2.5.). In his speech, Varela apologized for the poor treatment of the Chinese throughout Panama's history that I have detailed in this chapter. From what I was told by scholars present, this was the first time a Panamanian president had ever addressed the issue. The next day, various Panamanian media outlets debated the audacity and necessity for such bold comments. Perhaps this signals a new beginning for the progress towards a better treatment of the Chinese, who play such an important part in Panamanian society and economy today.

The United States' Presence

The influence of the United States, including both its racist ideologies and financial endeavors, deeply impacted the livelihoods of the Chinese living in Panama during the late 19th

and early 20th centuries. Beginning in the 19th century with the commission of the Panama Rail Road, American presence in Panama surfaced as a result of the United States' emerging status as a hegemonic global power. Not long after New Granada's (formerly known as Gran Colombia) independence from Spain (1821), the United States signed the 1846 Mallarino-Bidlack treaty that stated that it would remain neutral regarding Colombian control over the Panamanian isthmus (Mellander, 1971, p. 9). In exchange, the government of New Granada would "guarantee [the United States] transit rights across the isthmus" (Ibid.). The agreement was, in a sense, a promise from the U.S. that Americans would stay out of all political affairs between Colombia and Panama. Regarding the agreement, historian Gustavo A. Mellander (1971) states:

> It is ironic, indeed, that a country which acted with such regularity to guarantee Colombian control over the isthmus would someday play such a decisive role in its ultimate and final separation. (p. 9)

The irony becomes clear with the realization that only 57 years later, the United States signed another treaty, this time with Panama, that betrayed the contract made with Colombia and once again guaranteed U.S. access to the isthmus. Within the 1903 Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, the United States agreed to guarantee and help maintain Panamanian independence; in return, the United States was granted "perpetual rights to use, occupy and control a stated portion of territory along the proposed canal route as well as in any other area of the republic" (Ibid., p. 40). Mellander (1971) reports that the agreement also gave the United States access to any area deemed essential to the canal's construction. For the remaining 96 years, the United States would retain full authority over the Canal Zone in Panama.

In addition to the discriminatory laws inherited from the United States, as mentioned earlier, the Chinese became entangled in a web of transnational conflict where they were viewed

as a "prohibited race" (Siu, 2005) and yet sought after for their use in the construction of national projects. For example, although both the United States and the Republic of Panama maintained strict Chinese exclusion laws, the Canal Zone was the exception to the rule (Greene, 2009, p. 50). In fact, historian Julie Greene (2009) details the battle of chief engineer John Stevens in trying to receive United States approval for use of Chinese workers in the canal's construction (pp. 48-52). After much debate, then-president Theodore Roosevelt acquiesced stating, "If you could get white labor…I should prefer it. But the prime necessity is to complete the canal as speedily as possible" (Ibid., p. 50). Greene (2009) explains that problems arose further when the Chinese government "issued a proclamation forbidding its citizens to work on the canal," an attempt to protect Chinese from exploitation (Ibid.). At the same time, Chinese who already lived abroad could not return home due to a 1799 edict that branded anyone who left the country as a traitor (Pan, 1990, p. 8). Even upon its repeal in 1893 (Ibid., p. 142), its sentiments lingered. Seen as only a tool for exploitation, overseas Chinese were metaphorically homeless, lacking a feeling of belonging from any one nation. Even with small victories in civil rights, such as the repeal of Arnulfo Arias' discriminatory constitution, this feeling shaped the Chinese experience throughout the 1900s.

The 21st century resulted in new opportunities for transnational relations for the Chinese living in Panama. On December 31, 1999, United States official presence in Panama came to end with the enactment of the 1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties, signed by then-president Jimmy Carter (Harding, 2001, p. 127). With full control over the canal, and thus its country, the Republic of Panama no longer had to adhere to what Siu (2005) claims are "U.S. Cold War containment policies" (p. 37). In its efforts to diversify its foreign investments, Siu (2005) explains that after U.S. military withdrawal, Panama immediately began to "negotiate commercial relations and

establish mutual commercial offices with the PRC" (p. 37). Additionally, Siu (2005) expresses concerns over the maintenance of relations between Panama and "two Chinas," considering Panama's longstanding and official diplomatic relations with Taiwan (Ibid.). In its efforts to situate itself against the United States, the Republic of Panama has opened the door for stronger ties among global Chinese communities.

An International Affair: The People's Republic of China vs. the Republic of China

Territorial conflict between the PRC and The Republic of China (ROC), referred to as Taiwan throughout this thesis, emerged in 1949 during the Communist Revolution of China (Rigger, 2011, p. 4). After its defeat by the Communist Party's leaders in China, the defeated Republic of China (ROC) party fled to the island of Taiwan, where they established a new government (Ibid.). As noted by East Asian political scholar Shelley Rigger (2011), Taiwan's government developed throughout the second half of the 20th century from a single-party authoritarian government toward a multiparty democracy (p. 4). With this political distancing from communist PRC, Rigger (2011) explains that "the debate over how Taiwan should view its relationship with the mainland emerged into the open" (pp. 4-5). Additional complications arise from the knowledge that the PRC refuses to recognize Taiwan's legitimacy; Rigger (2011) posits, "in its view, the Communists' victory in 1949 extinguished the Republic, leaving the PRC as the only state representing the Chinese nation" (p. 5). Likewise, the PRC has made it abundantly clear that in order to prevent "China's sacred territory" from being severed, "the price they are willing to pay includes war" (Ibid.). The Taiwanese, on the other hand, situate themselves by maintaining the distinction between the PRC and the ROC while "not foreclosing the possibility of unification someday," causing Rigger to question how the Taiwanese people can "live both freely and at peace" (Ibid., p. 6). For the Chinese diaspora in Panama, the tension between the

two Chinas has forced them to rethink their "Chineseness" and their relations toward the two supercultural entities (Siu, 2005, p. 166). As I will explain further in chapter 4, competition between the PRC and Taiwan has resulted in similar debates among Chinese Panamanians, where music choice reflects this ongoing international conflict.

In addition to the social issues regarding Chinese citizenship in Panama, the Chinese diaspora also face struggles over international conflict from competition between the PRC and Taiwan for diplomatic recognition by the Panamanian government. In July 1997, the United Kingdom handed control of Hong Kong back to the People's Republic of China (Tok, 2013, p.139). Asian studies scholar Sow Keat Tok (2013) states that the PRC instituted a "one country, two systems" policy that sought to allow Hong Kong to operate under its own government while acknowledging PRC sovereignty (pp. 110-111). Likewise, the PRC has attempted to offer the same provisions to Taiwan (Ibid., p. 139). The primary difference between the two is that, unlike Hong Kong, Taiwan has moved steadily away from PRC governance toward an independent capitalist system. In regards to the PRC losing its "renegade" state, Tok (2013) posits, "[u]ntil the matter is resolved, Beijing does not wish to contribute to Taiwan's pro-independence cause by allowing it the international space it seeks" (p. 140). Lok Siu (2005) declares that the PRC began "pressuring countries like Panama to switch diplomatic relations (from Taiwan to the PRC) in order to continue economic interactions with Hong Kong" (p. 165). As a significant trade port that makes use of the Panama Canal, Siu (2005) argues that Panama cannot afford to lose the Panama-Hong Kong relationship (p. 166). In response, Taiwan has poured economic investments into Panama to maintain its ties (Ibid.). The ongoing dilemma for Panama regarding its relationships to the two Chinas emerges from an existing and historical ideological battle between the two entities and its conflicting political strategies after the end of World War II.

Today, Panama still recognizes the authority of the Taiwanese government in international affairs. Rigger (2011) observes that as of 2010, Panama was one of only 23 small countries to maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan instead of the PRC (p. 177). On their official webpage, the Taiwanese Embassy (2010) in Panama states that official ties between Panama and the Republic of China began in the early 20th century with the introduction of a "*consulado general*" (general consulate) (para. 1). By 1922, official diplomatic relations were established between Panama and the Republic of China (Ibid.). As a result of the separation of the PRC and the ROC in 1949, Taiwan created an embassy within Panama in 1954 (Ibid.). The Taiwanese embassy states their mission to "*profundizar y fortalecer en todos los aspectos de esta relación*" (to deepen and strengthen all aspects of the relationship) (Ibid., para. 2). The desire for Taiwan to reinforce its relationship with Panama is especially important with the United States departure from the country at the end of 1999.

Within Panama, the diplomatic conflict between the PRC and Taiwan manifests through the competition to garner support from the Chinese diaspora. They accomplish this through economic investments launched through the Panamanian government. For example, Chinese political scholars Chien-min Chao and Chih-chia Hsu (2006) state that in 2001, the "Chinese state enterprise showered largess on the government of Panama…pouring in US$2 million as a gesture of goodwill" (p. 56). As mentioned earlier, Taiwan has been responsible for the construction of the Sun Yat-Sen Institute, the Chinese Panamanian Cultural Center, and the Friendship Park, what Siu (2005) calls the "heart of the Chinese Panamanian community" (p. 21). Lok Siu (2005) states:

> The two Chinese governments used economic investments, promises of technical support, and arguments about national affinity and global political influence to compete for official relations with Panama. (p. 166)

Siu's statement is important for understanding the extent to which transnational conflicts affect Panamanian Chinese. With Chinese immigrant families extending back to the 19th century, various communities of the diaspora retain strong feelings as to which China the government of Panama should align itself. Further, Siu (2005) contends that the role of the United States has "fad[ed] into the background" with the transition from "Uncle Sam to Uncle Chang" in the domination of Panama's international affairs (pp. 164-166). The Chinese diaspora must negotiate their Chinese Panamanian identities in an effort to make sense of their changing world. One of the ways they negotiate their identities amid changing Panamanian relations is through music choice. In chapter 4, I elaborate on Chinese Panamanian engagement with Mandopop, a genre of music that specifically emerged in opposition to the American music industry.

Negotiating Identity: Chinese Panamanian Hybridity

Throughout their history of exploitation and marginalization, in addition to struggles for local and global recognition, the Chinese diaspora in Panama have found comfort in self-expression through a Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity. Their position, a result of the ongoing struggles of labor and exploitation, manifests through an active involvement in global and local politics as well as through musical expression. For example, Siu (2005) explains that Chinese Panamanians have strongly responded to "measures aimed at restricting their immigration and commercial competitiveness" (p. 51). Within Panama, the Chinese have formed organizations, such as the Chinese Panamanian Professionals Association (APROCHIPA), the Chinese Youth Association, and the Chinese Association of Panama, that seek to unite the diasporic population,

recruit aid from the United States and Taiwanese consulates, and strengthen their political representation (Ibid.). Siu (2005) argues that issues regarding immigration and commercial freedom are the "backdrop against which the issue of Chinese belonging in Panama has played out" (p. 51). Musically, these issues have resulted in a unique engagement with transnational Chinese and Taiwanese popular genres, as will be explored in chapters 3 and 4. Further, such engagement with international genres has encouraged Chinese Panamanians to begin performing their hybrid identities, as demonstrated by the musical success of Brenda Lau, whom I will discuss in chapter 5.

As a community built on the displacement of workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Chinese Panamanians strive to overcome their history of relegation to sub-human status. However, instead of full assimilation, or shedding themselves of their "Chineseness," they wish acceptance as both Chinese and Panamanian. The desire of migrants to embrace the cultures of both their past and present is not an unusual phenomenon. Indeed, James Clifford (1997) posits:

> The language of diaspora is increasingly invoked by displaced peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home. This sense of connection must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing process of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing. (p. 255)

Likewise, the Chinese in Panama maintain a connection to their homeland and express their double consciousness rather than risk erasure, underscored by their experiences of struggle. The connection, then, is one that is very real; it is not an invention, but an ongoing dialogue among the diasporic population, the Panamanian government, and the Chinese and Taiwanese nation-states.

Chapter III
El Dorado Soundscapes:
Space, Place, and Agency in a Panamanian Chinatown

Upon my first experience in the Chinatown of El Dorado in the summer of 2014, the hybridized Chinese Panamanian shops in the mall left me in a state of wonder. As noted in chapter 1, the entirety of the Chinatown combined representations of Chinese symbolism and Panamanian nationalism. Within the stores, both Chinese music and Spanish music could be heard. Since many of the workers in the shops were also either the owners or their relatives, it was clear that the combined representations of the Chinese and Spanish-language musics within these places were important to those in charge, especially considering almost all of the stores are owned by Chinese Panamanians. The sites appeared to tell a story; every person who went through El Dorado immediately knew they were in a Chinatown and that this community wished to assert their Chinese Panamanian identity. Through these musical sites, Chinese Panamanians establish an area marked by their hybrid experiences. Chinese Panamanians experience music in culturally constructed, physical "places" within broader social contexts, or "spaces." The people who inhabit these places imbue them with deep-felt cultural meanings, defining their experience as both Chinese and Panamanian, thus creating unique soundscapes.

Spaces and Places in Chinatowns

An understanding of the significance of El Dorado within the Chinese Panamanian community is dependent upon an understanding of the importance of Chinatowns for Chinese diasporic communities. When Chinese migrants develop communities outside of their homes of origin, the new locales are often referred to as "Chinatowns." In the words of diaspora studies scholar Ruth Mayer (2011), Chinatowns are "complex urban phenomena shaped by immigration politics, racialized discourses revolving around…citizenship, tourism, trade relations,

commercial exchanges, …labor exploitation, and cultural self-fashioning," among others (p. 1). Within the cultural self-fashioning of Chinese migrants, music surfaces as a signifier of these racialized discourses. According to ethnomusicologist Su Zheng (2010), music:

> reiterates diversified Asian cultural heritages…; it bears both the emblem of modernity and its shadow of colonialism and Westernization; it registers racialized Asian American history while resonating with diasporic cultural politics; it is powerful and meaningful enough to link the two sides of the Pacific, yet insignificant and irrelevant enough to escape the local…media's attention; and it embraces hybridity and heterogeneity… (p. 7)

Zheng's discussion about Chinese music in New York demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between music and identity in Chinatowns throughout the Americas. Additionally, the study of music in Chinatowns reveals the importance of *place* for Chinese diasporic communities.

The significance of Chinatowns emerges from a history of marginalization and discrimination toward Chinese migrants. Geographer Laurence J. C. Ma (2003) explains that Chinatowns resulted from a "need for mutual support among the migrants and partly to social and racial constraints…limit[ing] their spatial integration with mainstream communities" (p. 23). Ma (2003) considers Chinatowns as "spaces of difference" and as "islands of externalities" (Ibid.). These spaces of differences represent an ethnic enclave where Chinese immigrants can practice Chinese culture within the non-Chinese contexts. Similarly to larger nations such as the United States and Canada, Chinese migrants in Latin America were the victims of societal racism, as discussed in the previous chapter. As a result, Chinatowns can be found in many locations throughout Central and South America. As Ma (2003) continues, these "spaces of difference" thus tended to represent "only one type of Chinese community that attracts mainly

less well-off new migrants" (p. 23). Perhaps social progress for the Chinese in Panama has resulted in the abandonment of the old Panamanian Chinatown that fit within these parameters; however, I argue that the new Chinatown of El Dorado does not represent an "island of externalities," but what Ma (2003) calls an "ethnoburb," a "suburban ethnic cluster with a high level of Chinese concentration…with an active binational or multinational business orientation" (p. 24). Whereas the old Chinatown of Panama primarily received patronage from Chinese Panamanians, El Dorado significantly emerged with a focus on Panamanians of all nationalities, as demonstrated by the equal presence of Chinese and Panamanian customers within the area. Instead of representing an island of externality as present in Ma's other Chinatowns, El Dorado makes the Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity known to all of Panamanian society within its ethnoburb.

Soundscapes & Place in El Dorado

The Chinatown of El Dorado offers a unique experience not encountered elsewhere in Panama. In addition to the vast quantity of the visual displays of Chinese and Panamanian cultural representations, El Dorado features equally important clusters of soundscapes, replete with deep meaning and hybridized expressions of identity. Though the identity expressed within each soundscape is shared, each maintains unique conventions and practices. Anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes (1997) expresses disdain toward anthropology's focus on the visual. He argues the significance of sound and proposes for researchers to "consider sounds and points of view, voices and places, as connected social experiences" (p. 673). In El Dorado, the connections between the visual and auditory social experiences demonstrate the significance of understanding the Chinese Panamanian sonic environment. Importantly, the soundscapes mark the presence of Panama's Chinese community while continually reaffirming its hybrid identity.

At first glance, the El Dorado mall appears to be an ordinary mall like you could find in almost any city throughout the United States. Without walking into any stores or looking too closely at visual displays, passersby would not think twice about the fact that this particular shopping center was a hub for Chinese Panamanian discourse on expressions of identity. As I passed through the mall corridors, the food court, and the play areas, unmemorable music lacking any vocal track or identifiable qualities played in the atrium (See Figure 3.1). Shoppers represented an even mix of *mulattoes* (individuals of African and European descent), *mestizos* (individuals of Native American and European descent), and Chinese Panamanians, similar to any other shopping center in Panama. Unlike malls in the United States and other areas of Panama, El Dorado mall primarily consisted of independently owned stores, with some exceptions; the mall featured a few international chains such as Payless Shoe Store and Levi's, as well as Panamanian national stores, like Digicell and Panafoto. Throughout the multilevel mall, different musics could be faintly heard over the main area's background music, emanating from individual shops and enticing customers to investigate further. Unlike the atrium of the mall, individual shops did not feature programmed music; all music played was specifically chosen by those who ran the establishment. Passing through, I heard the heavy *boom-ch-boom-chick, boom-ch-boom-chick* bass rhythms of one store that featured *reggaetón* hits. Continuing on, I heard the faint sound of a Chinese language boy band come through the next store. More stores revealed different types of music, but no matter where I traveled, I was always within earshot of Cantonese or Mandarin lyrics.

Deeper examination of the mall reveals the complex relationships among stores, workers, the music played, and the specific ways the music is displayed. As discussed earlier, some stores feature softly played background music, while other stores firmly establish a musical presence

that extends beyond the physical boundaries of the stores' walls in an effort to lure in customers to shop. Listening to the different stores as I walked past each of them revealed the unique expressions of identity. The sonic environment not only revealed variations on a Chinese Panamanian identity, but also established an acoustic territory. Brandon LaBelle (2010) notes that acoustic designers often establish sonic territories in an attempt to "[map] out the behavior of sound phenomena in relation to architectural space" (p. 165). Further, LaBelle (2010) argues that malls are "scripted places" that intersect with "multiple forms of public experience" (p. 170). Sterne's (2003) analysis of the Mall of America reveals two layers of understanding:

> (1) where music and listeners' responses to it are themselves commodities to be bought, sold, and circulated; and (2) where this commoditized music becomes a form of architecture – a way of organizing space in commercial settings. (p. 317)

The various music expressions reflect these layers, since the audioarchitecture establishes the commercial intentions of the stores. As Sterne (2003) argues, music in El Dorado mall is used as a commercial tool to encourage customers to shop longer and buy more, while also situating the space of such shops within a defined area of El Dorado. In addition to Sterne's two layers, the minority status of the Chinese in Panama warrants the addition of a third layer: where the commoditized music reflects deeper understandings of agency and the assertion of identity. In my proposed third layer, assertion of identity becomes equally important to commercial intentions.

Through my exploration of El Dorado, I notice the myriad of soundscapes. Each store offers a unique experience to differentiate it from the ones around it. In the technology gadget store where Patricia was working, Chinese popular music played quietly in the background. Softly playing, the song included a light piano melody, stringed instruments, and a female voice

singing Chinese-language verses. Without understanding the lyrics, I could only assume it was a love song, one of heartbreak rather than excitement. In fact, the music I heard during my visit to this store seemed so a part of the background that it was not until my cousin pointed it out that I realized the music being played was in Chinese. Perhaps my lack of immediate musical recognition comes from my presence in a country where almost every song played is in a different language than I am accustomed to living in the United States. However, I would argue that any passerby, Spanish-speaking or English-speaking, would not immediately notice the distinct language of the music in Patricia's store without actively listening for it. In this scenario, the music was experiential for those who recognized it, background music for shoppers casually passing through, and an assertion of identity for the workers who played it.

In a different part of the mall, where I met Luz, popular music in Spanish blared through the speakers of the clothing, accessories, and home décor store geared towards teenagers. This store was marked by its loud environment and Asian pop-culture references, such as Hello Kitty, in its clothing and accessories. The dim lighting, intended to enhance the multiple colors of lamps and strobe lights, helped create the atmosphere of being in a dungeon. Behind the counter, workers had to step down from a higher platform, descending upon any customers who entered. With the addition of the loud music, this store's environment mirrored that of a dance club; it was dark and featured flashing lights and loud music. On many occasions, Chinese language popular songs could be heard. The combination of Asian-created merchandise, Chinese popular music, and Spanish-language music clearly reflects the Chinese Panamanian hybridity I have discussed thus far. Shifting between Spanish- and Chinese-language musics reflects the identity of the store and its customers. In a store such as this, the music was less intended as background music; it marked the identity of the store and its intention of connecting with Chinese

Panamanian youth. For many customers, especially older generations, this music becomes a site for LaBelle's (2010) disruptive spatiality. These soundscapes, among others, further exemplify LaBelle's notion of the acoustic territory, situating each store through the intentional use of specific musical experiences to create a clearly identifiable space filled with layers of constructed meanings. Additionally, by displaying Chinese language musics within a Spanish-speaking city, the community of El Dorado shares its culture and exemplifies LaBelle's (2010) argument for dynamic sharing.

The construction of the specific soundscapes of each retail store markedly represents the Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity. Through the auditory displays of specific music genres within retail establishments, the stores employ "audioarchitecture," mentioned earlier. As Jonathan Sterne (2003) elaborates, "the music becomes part of the consistency of that space…it becomes an essential part of the building's infrastructure" (p. 317). In addition to the store workers' intent to display their hybrid identities through Chinese and Panamanian music genres, shopkeepers use the music to further define the nature of their stores and the products within, as seen in the dance club-like store where Luz was working. In contrast, the store where Patricia worked marketed its products toward a broad range of technologically interested people. Thus, the audioarchitecture features Chinese and Spanish music intended to be background music and that seeks not to offend any individual's sensibilities. Alternatively, the music featured in other stores, such as the ones marketed to teenagers, displayed loud, assertive music that any person with sensitive hearing or unused to blaring music and that specific genre of music would find unappealing. Through these audioarchitectures within Chinese Panamanian soundscapes, the El Dorado community establishes its sense of place within the Panamanian context. In their expression of Chinese Panamanian identity, El Dorado provides an intersection between Chinese

Panamanian musical self-expression and the general Panamanian public shopping experience, further reflecting LaBelle's (2010) case for dynamic sharing.

Musical Expressions of Agency in El Dorado

Through the construction of places within El Dorado, Chinese Panamanians manage to express their agency, while reaffirming and asserting their hybrid identities. El Dorado soundscapes are important, not solely as sites for expression, but as sites for agency. By playing Chinese popular music in their stores, the Chinese Panamanian community makes it clear that they exist. Since the El Dorado shopping center is highly frequented by both the Chinese and non-Chinese communities, the Chinese diaspora in Panama City announces its presence and asserts its importance within Panamanian society as a whole. Additionally, by playing popular music as it is released in East Asia, they establish their modernity and their relevance within contemporary society. Both contemporary Latin American genres and contemporary Chinese genres are equally important for establishing these hybrid identities. Playing this variety of genres represents a musical broadcast to everyone who hears it, a demand from Chinese Panamanians to be accepted by their own standards.

How music is chosen throughout the various establishments demonstrates the vast differentiation between expressions of identity within a unified community. Of the Chinese popular music heard in stores and with the exception of the few stores marketed primarily towards teenagers and young adults, background music featuring soft, romantic Chinese popular songs occurred the most frequently in many establishments. Most interestingly, this soft background music featured Chinese languages. Typically, however, programmed music attempts to avoid lyrics, as heard throughout the main areas of the mall. As such, I argue that the music featured in the various shops cannot be labeled "programmed." Specifically addressing Muzak,

ethnomusicologist Ronald M. Radano (1989) points out that any lyrics in music "call up contemplative thinking" and people "begin to have opinions" (p. 450). Through the store workers' emphasis on the music's Chinese language, they firmly establish their identities and assert their presence, even within background music intended to be what Radano (1989) calls "the epitome of innocuous sound forms" (p. 450). Though Radano's argument might apply to many malls within the United States, it clearly does not fit within El Dorado's soundscapes. Unlike Muzak, which exists specifically for commercial intentions, music within El Dorado includes music for culture, both encouraging consumers to shop and enabling them to experience the Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity. Stores that advertise to younger demographics tend to not only display nonprogrammed music with vocal lyrics, but they do so in the foreground. Since the music demonstrates the hybridity of the Chinese Panamanian community, its placement in the foreground signifies a zealous assertion of identity.

Even with the variations in music experience between stores, the context of the music remains the same. Representing individualized expressions of agency, the various shop owners create places that reaffirm their hybrid identities. Reflective of Amiri Baracka's (1967) notion of the changing same, Chinese Panamanian musical expression, though manifested differently in each store, reverberates with the need to belong and have their dual identities accepted by the rest of society. As discussed in the previous chapter, these needs result from a harsh past consisting of years of abuse and oppression by the Colombian, United States, and Panamanian governments. Though it would appear that focus on the Chinese dimensions of the Chinese Panamanian identity would exoticize them, in reality, Chinese Panamanians normalize Chinese popular music within Panama. Since many non-Chinese shoppers pass through El Dorado regularly, Chinese culture becomes a part of the every day experiences of those who frequent the

shopping center; it *belongs* in Panama City, as do the Chinese Panamanians who created such acoustic territories.

Constructing the Chinese Panamanian Experience

By creating a Chinese Panamanian place within Panama City, the Chinese diasporic community creates a safe area where they can freely express themselves. Within this space saturated with profound meaning, they can proudly announce to the world that they are a relevant community and that through displays of visual representations and auditory expression, their identities are valid. Likewise, Deborah Wong's (2004) analysis of the music of Filipino American rapper La Quian pertains to my research of Chinese Panamanian identity. In the same way that La Quian reveals his strong assertion of an Asian identity, Chinese Panamanian engagement with both Latin American and Chinese genres demonstrates theirs. Further, as revealed in the previous chapter, this need for asserting presence, validation, and belonging within Panamanian society emerges from a history in which Chinese migrants were constantly sub-humanized, invalidated, and forced to feel as if they should not be there. Additionally, different groups within the community, as seen in El Dorado, manifest their assertions of identity through different means. El Dorado mall allows for this differentiation by maintaining and promoting soundscape clusters.

In light of their tragic histories, Chinese Panamanians continuously create and maintain these soundscapes that represent their double consciousness. When present in El Dorado, the sonic environment evokes the feeling of home, whether real or imagined. However, unlike generations of the past, the Chinese diaspora of Panama has access to newer technologies. These technologies allow them to incorporate mediated music into their identities. In the same way that Wong (2004) emphasizes that she is not "guilty of 'the optimistic attribution of agency to

consumers…and the tendency in cultural studies to celebrate fragmentation'" (p. 87), neither does my study of the musical experience of Chinese Panamanians create an imagined sense of agency. As I will explore further in the next chapter, young Chinese Panamanians deliberately engage with music technologies as a means to display their pride in their Chinese heritage and their Chinese Panamanian hybrid identities.

Chapter IV
Music & Technoculture in the Chinese Panamanian Diaspora

The Chinese diaspora in Panama marks their identity through a technocultural engagement with transnational music genres. For Chinese Panamanian youth, these genres include Cantopop, which appeared in the late 1970s, and Mandopop, which came about in the early 1980s, two specific genres that emerged out of China that use international popular music styles and Chinese languages. With limited opportunities to experience live Chinese music performances within Panama, young Chinese communities discover and enjoy Chinese popular music to establish their Chinese Panamanian hybrid identities. They find new music through internet and digital technologies available on tablets, cell phones, and computers. These technologies help maintain a community identity shaped by transnational music genres, reflective of a musical technoculture. This technoculture emulates global, social worlds, which in turn become localized within Panama. The music from the Chinese popular musicians reflects that internationality. As such, ethnomusicologist Harris M. Berger (2003) argues, "singers and songwriters use forms of talk from the social world around them to publicly think about, enact, or perform their identities" (pp. xv-vvi). Likewise, this chapter explores the ways in which Chinese Panamanians use technologies to enact their hybrid identities.

Chinese Panamanians in El Dorado act as agents in localizing global genres, what Timothy Taylor (2003) calls glocalization, through two predominant East Asian popular music genres. Both the Cantopop and Mandopop music genres are written, recorded, and produced in Hong Kong and Taiwan, respectively; yet, Chinese Panamanians blur the distinction between the global and local definitions of the music. Instead of enjoying the music as "global" or "foreign," community members of El Dorado incorporate it into their everyday lives, inscribe it with their own personal experiences, and thus localize it. However, without access to internet, streaming,

and other playback technologies, musical engagement with popular East Asian genres would be more complicated within Panama, where the most commonly heard music on the radio is in Spanish or English and features artists of North American, Latin American, or Iberian heritage. Particularly, Panamanian record stores do not feature significant varieties of Mandopop and Cantopop CDs, if they have them at all. Panamanians express their agency through their active discovery and experience of Chinese popular music; in doing so, they decide for themselves how they wish to be heard. They exert agency through global consumerism, reflecting Taylor's (2001) argument that "agency makes the difference: people are either agents in the face of technology, or they are unagentic" (p. 31). In this case, Chinese Panamanians react against the socially accepted, and mass media-constructed standards of Panamanian identity as expressed through the more common Spanish-language music. As agents, they incorporate Chinese transnational popular musics and languages into their musical self-expression.

Popular Music of China and Taiwan

East Asia features a myriad of musical styles and genres rooted in transnational histories; however for young diasporic Chinese throughout the world, popular music emerges as a marker of Chinese identity. Linguistics scholar Phil Benson (2013) explains that in recent history, East Asian popular music is "marked by the rise of genres, such as J-pop (Japan), K-pop (Korea), Cantopop (Hong Kong) and Mandopop (Taiwan) that are largely defined by the use of Asian languages in conjunction with international pop music styles" (p. 23). He explains that even though English popular music is common, people prefer music performed in languages that the listeners "know best" (Ibid.). For teenagers and young adults in Panama, Mandopop and Cantopop appear especially important, since both genres emerged from one of the two Chinas. Like the populations living in East Asia, Chinese Panamanians prefer music in languages they

understand best. Additionally, since many speak Chinese languages as well as Spanish, experiencing music in both languages represents an affirmation of their dual identities.

Cantopop and Mandopop both emerged as the result of East Asian musicians who wished to incorporate Western popular music into local music genres. Beginning in the 1970s, Hong Kong began to produce its own version of rock music. Musicologist Joanna Ching-Yun Lee (1992) states that the emergence of rock music in Cantonese, what came to be called "Cantorock" by *Billboard* correspondent Hans Ebert, "was related to American and British rock of that period and characterized by electric guitars and heavy percussion" (p. 14). As the genre developed, it incorporated musical elements and instrumentation from Western and Japanese popular music and came to be known as Cantopop (Ibid.). In addition to the Western influences, the glocalization of the music manifested through its use of what Lee argues are "quasi-pentatonic melodies and almost exclusively amorous lyrics," which were often taken from Chinese folk tunes (Ibid.). Taylor (1997) further explicates the effects of Western influence and globalization, arguing that even though much of the global/cultural mixing results in music that "sound[s] increasingly North American," performers' languages and vocal style make it their own (p. 196). Cantopop and Mandopop, though they may sound very western, are markedly East Asian through the language, instrumentation, and vocal style. Further, as genres that surfaced through the inclusion of various eastern and western styles, the music is international in its very essence. Hong Kong has remained a cosmopolitan center for international interaction throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, and as such, the popular music created there represents the region's cultural internationalism.

The Cantopop music industry grew rapidly due to its hybridity and ease of accessibility to those who understood the words. With the genre's inclusion of international music aesthetics,

people from various backgrounds could connect with the music. Discussing the early success of Cantopop, humanities scholars Yiu-Wai Chu and Eve Leung (2013) state,

> Not unlike Hong Kong itself, which is constantly assimilating different cultures, Cantopop's renditions of Euro-American, Japanese, Mandarin and even Korean songs made it a vibrant hybrid of different musical cultures. (p. 67)

The internationality of Cantopop resulted in its success throughout East Asia, North America, and Europe, with Hong Kong artists performing in major cities such as Toronto, Las Vegas, London, and Amsterdam (Ibid., p. 66). As a glocal music genre, Cantopop has never been exclusively local. It has always been tied to international music conventions as well as dispersed Chinese diasporic communities (Ibid.). An example of this internationality can be seen in the album *Overthrow of Love* (1992), by musician Jacky Cheung (Ibid., p. 68). Chu and Leung (2013) state that this album features "cover versions whose melodies had originally been composed in Japan, Taiwan, and America, with the lyrics rewritten in Chinese" (Ibid.). Due to its incorporation of a variety of styles, Chu and Leung (2013) note that it was one of the best selling Cantopop albums in history. Eventually, however, Hong Kong public perception changed toward a dominant and more elite preference for the Mandarin language. Reflecting this perceptual change, people began to prefer the Mandarin-language music of Mandopop. As a genre that also used international styles, Mandopop was written and performed in Mandarin instead of Cantonese.

Emerging in the 1980s, anthropologist Marc L. Moskowitz (2009) explains that Mandopop developed "out of Taiwan's 1970s Campus Songs Folk Movement" and draws on multiple coexisting traditions in East Asia including "Shanghai's 1930's jazz era, Japanese *enka*, Taiwan's Taiyupop…, and Hong Kong's Cantopop" (p. 69). Music sociologist Ho Wai-Chung

(2006) states that college students initiated the Campus Songs Folk Movement by incorporating modern Chinese folk music into mainstream Mandarin popular music (p. 131). Further, ethnomusicologist Nancy Guy (2001) notes that the movement was "motivated by a desire to keep Taiwan from developing the same relationship with American music that it had with Japanese pop—influence and imitation—and it laid a foundation for the evolution of the island's own popular style" (p. 357). Taiwan's conflict with the PRC resulted in Taiwanese students expressing "growing consciousness of their Taiwanese cultural identity," as Wai-Chung (2006) observes (p.131).

However, unlike Cantopop, Mandopop did not receive immediate success. In fact, Moskowitz (2009) notes that PRC government officials labeled the genre "morally decadent and aesthetically empty" and that people could be arrested "simply for listening to Mandopop from Taiwan which had not been authorised by the state" (p. 70). Despite ideological resistance from the state, by 2002, Mandopop from Taiwan "accounted for an estimated eighty to ninety per cent of Chinese language music sales in the PRC" (Ibid.). For example, the 2005 song "*Bu Xiang Zhang Da*" (Don't Want To Grow Up) by Taiwan-based Mandopop girl group S.H.E., won Top 10 Gold Song Awards in Hong Kong. This piece features the famous motif from Mozart's Symphony No. 40 as the main theme as well as subtle references to Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, with lyrics alluding to the tale of Cinderella. Additionally, it incorporates Western pop standards of a heavy bass rhythm, repetitions of the refrain, and a bridge leading into the final section. Sung in Mandarin, the music video incorporates dark ambience and mythological themes (Yuan, 2006). Notably, one of the main villains in the song depicts a giant-sized, Caucasian male, wearing Victorian era formalwear complete with top hat and cane (See Figure 4.1). Upon his demise, when he falls over and crashes to the ground, an explosion erupts leading to a scene

depicting what appears to be the Greek goddess Athena and other creatures from Greek mythology. Though the song and lyrics seem to tell the tale of a young girl not wanting to grow up and abandon the fairy tales she loves, the scenery of the music video represents a telling tale of western hegemony and it, literally, crashing down. The refrain states, "There won't be anymore fairy tales, I don't wish to grow up, I'd rather be stupid and silly forever" (*Lyrics*, n.d.). Combined with such recognizable references to Western classical music, the lyrics of the song demonstrate a resistance to the values of Western power, including the abandonment of mythology and beliefs.

As the defining feature of Mandopop, Mandarin represents more than just its position as a more commonly spoken dialect of Chinese; it also exemplifies a symbol of elite status and musically reflects the ongoing competition between the PRC and Taiwan. Chu and Leung (2013) attribute the rise of Mandopop over Cantopop to the standardization of Mandarin as the dialect of Chinese nationality. They posit, "[i]n this context, Cantopop has come to be seen as a musical genre of a subordinate dialect" (p. 75). Further, Chu and Leung (2013) argue that music in Mandarin, the "*lingua franca* of Hong Kong and other Chinese communities," has overtaken Cantonese "as the trendsetter of pan-Chinese popular cultures" (p. 76). With such competition between the Cantopop and Mandopop industries, it comes as no surprise that both genres feature prominently in the musical soundscapes of El Dorado, whose community also experience the results of PRC and Taiwanese conflict.

For Chinese communities in East Asia, Cantopop and Mandopop reflect the global, social issues of Western hegemony, as demonstrated in the S.H.E. music video, while it also explores more general themes such as love and loss. Diasporic Chinese communities, who also experience these issues, can connect with these musics at a personal level, regardless of where the music

was created. With the invention of digital streaming applications similar to Pandora Radio and Spotify, options for listening to Chinese language music has broadened, thus allowing Chinese diasporic communities to engage with new and old music. Likewise, ethnomusicologist Gavin Steingo (2015) argues that mobile listening devices and streaming services have made music "more accessible than ever, moving at an ever-faster pace in an unimpeded flow" (p. 103). Music apps such as these allow for individuals to experience new and familiar music by allowing them to create lists of songs, albums, or genres that they like and then suggest to the listener new songs that fit within those same categories. By continually exposing its listeners to new musics within the same categories, these streaming services give diasporic communities infinite options for incorporating the music into their self-expression and definitions of identity.

Music apps such as DuoMi (多米电台) and China FM can be downloaded on iPhone or Android phones, played through a computer's web browser, or opened on tablets and used anywhere in the world. Though some of these apps are created in countries such as Canada and the United States, most come from China or Taiwan (Yi, 2011; Regmi, 2015). Specifically, DuoMi is based in Beijing, reflecting the contemporariness of the music played on the devices (Yi, 2011). Importantly, these apps feature music in both Mandarin and Cantonese, while apps such as China FM additionally feature music from China, Taiwan, Korea, and North America. Even more striking are the ways in which diasporic community members engage with these technologies and expand their functions as a way of resisting erasure of the Chinese aspects of their Chinese Panamanian identities.

The enactment of identity through digital internet technologies was powerfully present in my exploration of El Dorado. During my first visit to the dance club-like store discussed in chapter 3, I walked in to find colorful, Asian-inspired apparel, t-shirts, large jewelry, a variety of

colorful and jeweled phone cases, and home décor aimed at teenagers. There, I spoke with three young, apparently Chinese women behind the counter and as I began discussing my research to the first woman to address us, she immediately replied with, "I don't know anything about Chinese music, but she does!" and directed us toward my first encounter with Luz, who I introduced earlier. Identifying as a Chinese-Panamanian, Luz grew up in Pacora Chepo, Panama, in the country with very few roads. According to her, "*Es un campo. Todo es natural*" (It's the country. Everything is natural) (Luz, personal communication, July 28, 2014). She has family that live in multiple different areas of the globe, including China, the United States, and Spain. In addition to Spanish, she speaks Cantonese. Most importantly for my research, Luz explains that she regularly listens to Chinese popular music and stated that many of her friends and family also listen to Chinese popular music. Curious as to how she comes across new artists from China and Taiwan from so far away, she pulled out her cell phone, opening an app. The music app on her phone is entirely in Chinese and plays popular music as it becomes available.

With the technology available to connect musical cultures across the world, even a young girl growing up in the countryside of Panama can still feel a connection to her family's heritage. Luz went on to share with me some of her favorite artists, including musicians from the PRC and Taiwan. In a discussion about the musical experiences that Luz, her friends, and her family regularly engaged with, she listed a few Chinese bands of notable interest, all based in either Taiwan or Hong Kong: Twins, a Cantopop duo based in Hong Kong; S.H.E., discussed earlier; and Fahrenheit, a Mandopop boy band based in Taiwan. Luz explains that her exposure to music from China comes from her friends and family. Though she also listens to Spanish-language music with equal prominence on the radio and at live concerts, access to the music of currently trending Chinese popular musicians can only be accomplished through mobile music apps, such

as DuoMi or China FM. Having been born and raised in Panama, Luz did not live in China for any significant time of her life, although she visited the country on occasion. Her enjoyment of music from China comes from her agency as a consumer and her desire to reflect the Chinese dimension of her hybrid identity. By localizing Cantopop and Mandopop, she connects to the music by understanding it through the lenses of her experiences of life in Panama.

As I continued through El Dorado mall, I entered a jewelry store, where the walls were lined with gold and silver necklaces, earrings, and a variety of decorative trinkets. Continuing into the store, we could hear Chinese language music emerging from the back office, loud enough to permeate the environment and inform us that we were, like most of El Dorado, in a primarily Chinese-run establishment. After waiting patiently for the worker, Sun Li, to finish up with another customer, I walked around admiring the jewel-encrusted memorabilia in the store, which included birds, dragons, and other creatures symbolic of Panama and Chinese heritage. After agreeing to talk with us, she explains that she was born in China, but moved to Panama at a young age. Her 10-years younger brother, however, was born in Panama. When prompted about the incorporation of Chinese culture in her family life, she emphasizes its importance, noting that her brother was sent to study in China for two years. Particularly, she stresses that her brother needed to learn to respect their elders. It seemed to me that her brother being sent to China was due to his troublemaking, but what is most noticeable is the parent's belief that only Chinese culture could teach him respect. Sun Li further reiterates the knowledge that Chinese and Panamanian cultures differ greatly.

Musically, Sun Li describes the transnationality of her music tastes. Though one of her favorite artists is the United States' pop star Lady Gaga, Sun Li also enjoys Mandopop. She mentions that her favorite Chinese musicians are Mandopop artists Na Ying and Yang Kun, both

of whom are based in the PRC. Na Ying, specifically, began her recording career in Taiwan before becoming established in the PRC. I asked Sun Li how she came across such a variety of Chinese musicians, to which she replied, "*Internet y en shows como en The Voice en China, CDs, DVDs*..." (Internet and in shows such as The Voice in China, CDs, DVDs…) (Sun Li, personal communication, July 28, 2014). She laments that even though there are cosplay events for the Chinese community, where people attend dressed up as their favorite anime or comic book characters, there are no music events. According to Sun Li, there is no market for Chinese music in Panama. Most importantly, Sun Li's discovery of Chinese music comes from her engagement with the technoculture, where in addition to CDs and DVDs, most of her musical experience comes from the internet. Even the television shows she watches are streamed through a digital playback technology.

In the opening narrative to this thesis, I described the experience of meeting Patricia. Unlike Luz and Sun Li, Patricia was born in China, but moved to Panama when she was 13 years old. As the mother of a young Chinese Panamanian toddler, her role as culture-bearer is important, especially considering her use of digital technologies and Chinese popular music as the format for transmission. Through Patricia passing on her cultural heritage to her son, the child will grow up understanding Chinese language in music, furthering his ability to learn how to speak it. In addition to her parental role, Patricia's engagement with Chinese popular music also stems from the ease of understanding it. Reflecting Benson's (2013) argument that people want music that they can understand best, Patricia prefers Chinese language musics to the difficult to comprehend lyrics of Spanish-language music. Without internet services and digital technologies, Patricia's method of culture-bearing would be much more difficult to maintain.

Chinese Panamanian Technoculture

Modern digital technologies provide diasporic Chinese communities the ability to immediately and powerfully engage with East Asian popular music. The use of available digital technologies results in a technoculture, what Leslie C. Gay, Jr. and René T. A. Lysloff (2003) define as the concern "with how technology implicates cultural practices involving music" (p. 2). As discussed in the preceding chapters, Chinese Panamanian cultural practice results from their marginalized histories and they assert their hybrid identities through the creation of audibly marked soundscapes. Examining the technological implications involving the music displayed in El Dorado further makes evident the cultural importance of such technologies in identity studies. Within the sonic environments they create, the availability, the use of, and the agency in the operation of digital technologies all combine to create a space where Chinese Panamanians can freely express themselves and demand acceptance from the rest of society. They call out for their identities to be accepted socially as both Chinese and Panamanian, demonstrated through the auditory displays of Chinese popular music broadcast alongside Spanish-language music, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The importance of the Chinese Panamanian musical technoculture stems from its impact on diasporic musical expression. Ethnomusicologist Paul D. Greene (2005) writes that technologies "have the potential…of opening up new directions for musical expression and evolution, inspiring new logics of music creation and empowering local cultural and expressive values" (p. 3). Greene's acknowledgement of the potential for technocultural impact rings especially true in El Dorado mall. Prior to modern digital music technologies, Chinese Panamanians relied solely on the available Chinese music imported from China in the form of cassettes, records, and CDs. They depended on the merchants from the few stores who ordered

the music to provide them with a variety of options, which included music years after its original release. Looking further back, as discussed in chapter 2, Chinese Panamanians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries would depend on oral tradition, perhaps singing *muk'yu* and certainly other forms of vocal music. With the invention of digital technologies, the musical experience of Chinese Panamanian youth becomes more relevant to their hybrid identities and their conceptions of what it means to be "hip, cool, fun loving, carefree, and able to follow one's heart's desires," as phrased by Zhou and Lee (2004, p. 3). As in Greene's statement, Chinese Panamanian cultural and expressive values become empowered. In this situation, Chinese popular music becomes the means for empowerment.

Since the 1990s, Chinese popular music has grown into a commercial and globally mediated presence. The origins of Cantopop and Mandopop show that they have always been international genres. Common in Chinatowns and diasporic Asian communities, these genres' popularity results from their ability to establish a diasporic Chinese identity within non-Asian societies. Additionally, diasporic Chinese communities localize the music and inscribe it with their own meanings, experiencing it in different ways than those who listen to it within the PRC and Taiwan.

Ethnomusicologist Martin Clayton (2009) also situates the global into the local by discussing the localization of the guitar in India. Instead of focusing on one instrument, however, I extend his argument to include popular global music genres in overseas Chinese communities. Concerning the guitar, Clayton (2009) contends three arguments:

> First, even the most global of instruments is theorized on a local level—that is, people understand it in relation to a local cultural context. Second, understandings of this kind imply theories of three-way connections between instrument, place, and community, in

> which global music culture is given a local interpretation. Third, and consequently, the story of the guitar in India can be understood as one of encounter and exchange taking place largely at a local level through negotiations between individuals. (pp. 65-66)

I argue that these three contentions also apply to Cantopop and Mandopop in the Chinese Panamanian community. Like the guitar in India is understood locally, Chinese Panamanians understand these genres in relation to their experiences of growing up and living in Panama. Through their engagement with popular music through the creation of a hybrid soundscape, they imply connections among the music, El Dorado, and the Chinese community. Finally, as Chinese Panamanians attempt to represent their Chineseness as a group, these social relationships can be understood as a negotiation between individuals about how to self-identify.

Not only do Chinese Panamanians within El Dorado use digital technologies to express agency in defining society's definition of them, but it also helps to establish community. In chapter 3, I discussed the soundscapes of El Dorado, marked by the presence of Chinese and Spanish-language musics playing with equal prominence. The resulting community built on this acoustic environment emerges from active engagement with technology. Unlike the negative critiques of the past about technology in culture, Deborah Wong (2003) assumes "that technology carries with it the potential for democracy and community building" (p. 126). The situation in El Dorado clearly reflects Wong's statement through the community's use of technology in helping to establish and actively maintaining a Chinese Panamanian hybrid acoustic territory. As a marker of identity, the important role of technology for situating El Dorado soundscapes is also evidenced through the individualization present in musical displays of various shops. Thus, identity manifests directly through the technoculture, where the community can engage with Chinese popular music.

Chinese Panamanians require specific audio formats to broadcast the most contemporary, digital versions of Chinese language musics within their soundscapes. The way audio formats are used to broadcast such music indicates their cultural implications that serve a function beyond just engaging with local, Spanish-language music. Specifically, much of the music comes from recordings played through media playback technologies that include CD players, iPhones, tablets, and computers. For example, while I interviewed Patricia, she audibly played Chinese popular music from CDs through a mini stereo system, which sat on the counter behind her. Patricia represents a rare case where CDs are still used on occasion, since few people still incorporate them into the sonic environment. More commonly, however, playback of MP3 files predominate through streaming services accessed on wireless internet connections available through iPhones, tablets, and computers, allowing users to globally connect and share music immediately. Discussing media and the notion of "mediality," Sterne (2012) argues the importance of the MP3's use for communication across a range of playback technologies stating that such technologies "are a fundamental part of what it means to speak, hear, or to do anything with sound" (p. 10). Since the majority of the El Dorado soundscapes feature music from streaming services and internet downloads, the MP3 audio format becomes ubiquitous. Further, the compression of the audio files allows for increased accessibility and usability also across multiple playback technologies. As demonstrated in Sterne's (2012) argument, MP3s within El Dorado allow the diasporic community to communicate their hybrid identity.

Streaming services and internet based applications for tablets and cell phones all require a connection to the internet, whether wirelessly or through a direct connection to computers. As I mentioned, music experience of the past required CDs and DVDs, which are no longer necessary with the accessibility of the internet. Like most malls in Panama, El Dorado offers free wireless

internet (wifi) to anyone who passes through. Due to this accessibility of the internet, MP3s of any type of music can be downloaded, streamed, or burned onto CDs and played wherever is most convenient for the user. In other words, as long as a person has the capital to own a wireless device, the ability to download and experience Chinese popular music is possible. However, those without such capital only need to walk through El Dorado to live the Chinese Panamanian experience. In fact, while I walked through El Dorado mall, I could not turn my head in any direction without seeing at least one or two people looking down at their smartphones, which were connected to the internet. Anyone within El Dorado can choose to be a part of a hybrid soundscape.

Timothy Taylor (2001) maintains that the use of such audio formats and music consumption practices come from individuals' agency. Patricia's agency is exemplified by her use of the technology to musically display her Chineseness within a Panamanian context. Technologies enable her access to the music on multiple playback devices, thus helping her to enact her identity without being limited to one type of technological object. Lysloff and Gay (2003) argue that there are three levels of methodological distinction for understanding the role that technologies play: ontological, pragmatic, and phenomenological (p. 6). For Chinese Panamanians, the ontological includes the audio files and playback devices such as computers, tablets, and smart phones. Pragmatically, these devices play MP3 recordings in order to create a sonic experience when customers and other people passing by enter their establishments. Most importantly, Lysloff and Gay (2003) note that "the *phenomenological* focuses on how the technological impacts human experience in ways not directly tied to the function of a particular technology" (pp. 6-7). The phenomenological implications of the technology for Chinese Panamanians comes from the deeper meanings embedded in the auditory experience; Chinese

Panamanians view the technologies as a connection to their Chineseness. As mentioned in chapter 1, instilling conceptions about what it means to be Chinese to subsequent generations is especially important. Thus, the technologies are important for claiming Chinese Panamanian hybrid identities; these deeper meanings reflect an assertion of identity. Taylor (2001) states that "music technology, then, both acts on its users and is continually acted on by them" (p. 38). Through this cycle of technology and consumers acting on one another, the needs of these audio formats extend beyond operational. Likewise, the technology/consumer cycle has resulted in an entirely new function within El Dorado.

The soundscapes of El Dorado mark the Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity, while the media used demonstrates the culturally bound experience of technology. As in Sterne's (2003) argument, the programmed spaces of El Dorado are "the substance of affect and experience" (p. 341). As I discussed in chapter 3, the experience of walking through shops in El Dorado mall is the experience of the Chinese Panamanian hybrid identity. Regarding cultural conceptions about technology, Deborah Wong (2003) states "that any technology is not only culturally constructed but that its uses are culturally defined as well; the 'same' technology can thus have very different applications and/or evocative associations in different societies" (pp. 125-126). Beyond Sterne's (2012) operational needs for technology, cultural needs dictate how it gets used. This can be heard within the sonic environment of El Dorado, where the cultural implications for technology far surpass the superficial goal of simply broadcasting a store's background music. Most importantly, these formats are used to engage with the popular music of China and Taiwan, thus reflecting Clayton's (2009) argument that music is understood at a local level.

Localization of Chinese Popular Music

Once transnational popular music becomes available through the various technological audio formats, music consumers within diasporas position them within local contexts. In El Dorado, the Chinese diaspora relates to the messages in the music through the experience of living in Panama. With their racially-motivated oppression and marginalized histories, young Chinese in Panama City connect to messages such as those in S.H.E.'s "Don't Want To Grow Up." Like their contemporaries in China and Taiwan, they too feel the pressures of western hegemony, experienced through the political turmoil that emerged at the turn of the 21st century. As heard through the soundscapes that include both Cantonese and Mandarin music, further localization stems from negotiations as to whether the community should identify with the PRC or Taiwan. A majority of the people I interviewed spoke more Cantonese than Mandarin, yet Panama has always maintained closer ties to Taiwan, where Mandarin predominates. By equally incorporating music in both languages, Chinese Panamanians represent the PRC and Taiwan, thus avoiding a pronounced stance in favor of one country over the other. As discussed in chapter 2, the PRC and Taiwanese supercultures exert influence over the Panamanian diaspora. In not favoring one nation over the other, Chinese Panamanians take pride in their heritage as members of the Chinese community while avoiding making overtly political statements.

Many Chinese popular music albums feature songs in multiple languages, including English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. Benson (2013) argues that the multilingual albums "enacted pan-Asian identities through artfully constructed pastiches of Asian and Anglo-American musical styles" (p. 26). By creating music that enacts multiple pan-Asian identities, Chinese musicians create music that allows for individualization so that diasporic communities around the world can engage with and localize it. Concerning the enactment of identity through music,

Stephen Feld (1984) writes "music communicates identity, sameness or difference of character, as it exists amongst makers and listeners, persons and groups" (p. 12). Socially constructed meanings about how to shape their identity come from the music through its ability to communicate a pan-Chinese identity.

Within El Dorado, Luz, Patricia, and Sun Li's musical experiences appear frequently, as Chinese Panamanians commonly engage with Chinese-language musics through digital technologies, all while incorporating the music into their own personal narratives. In the PRC and Taiwan, exposure to Cantopop and Mandopop is nothing out of the everyday. In Panama, however, the rarely heard genres expose the community's deep connection with the land of their heritage while reaffirming and asserting their Chineseness as Panamanians. Further, ethnomusicologists Tim Brace, Joanna C. Lee, and Cynthia P. Wong (2001) note that Chinese popular music has "adhered to cultural, moral, and aesthetic ideologies that pay homage to history" (p. 360). In this local context, Chinese Panamanians proudly display Chinese music genres despite this diaspora's history of marginalization, signifying an open defiance against their harsh treatment in the past, but also reflecting the progress toward their sense of belonging from Panamanian society at large. Chinese Panamanian open engagement with popular music genres from the two Chinas confirms Lok Siu's (2005) assertion that there exists an "emphasis on sustaining a binational and bicultural identification" (p. 189). El Dorado soundscapes are made up of individual and personal incorporations of expression, which are only possible through the digital technologies and audio formats. The expressions within the soundscapes emerge as especially important in maintaining identity in the populations who use them. Clearly, the ongoing cycle between technologies and consumers confirms Deborah Wong (2003) and Taylor's (2001) contentions about the relationship between people, technology, and cultural

context. As such, the existence of a technoculture helps maintain a Chinese Panamanian identity for the community in El Dorado.

Chinese Panamanian Identity

The Chinese diaspora of Panama creates and maintains its hybrid identity within an acoustic territory constructed of Cantopop, Mandopop, and Spanish-language popular music genres through digital and media technologies. Though each member of the community expresses their Chineseness differently by projecting the music through different media and at varying volumes, their location within El Dorado mall, and the type of atmosphere they wish to create, the group identity presents itself through common genres and the way shop owners play Chinese-language music alongside Spanish-language music. Reflecting Turino's (2004) "trajectories of habits," the sonically constructed environments are not always intentional; the environments become a part of Chinese Panamanian everyday experience. Additionally, the phenomenological experience of using technologies becomes a part of Chinese Panamanian everyday life. The musical markers of identity that make El Dorado Chinese Panamanian are fundamental to their representation of a Chinese Panamanian hybrid community.

The inseparability of music and technoculture in the expression of contemporary social identity demonstrates the complexity of situating minority communities. As revealed through the previous discussion about the significant incorporation of Cantopop and Mandopop into the Chinese Panamanian hybrid soundscape, new digital technologies have and continue to reshape the ways that the community defines itself. These technologies serve as empowerment, granting the community the ability to influence Panamanian society's perceptions about their existence. They demonstrate Chinese Panamanian relevance as community members and emphasize that they belong and are a vital part of Panamanian society. Additionally, new digital technologies

create the possibility for future expressions of hybridity through music. In the next chapter I discuss one such artist, Brenda Lau, who not only engages with the technoculture by listening to Chinese and Panamanian popular music genres, but also sings and performs them as a local Chinese Panamanian. As I came to find out, Lau represents a possible future for Chinese musical expression in Panama, one that enables the community to experience live Chinese Panamanian concerts and opens the door for future Chinese Panamanian local musicians.

Chapter V
Finding Home:
Chineseness & the Panamanian Hybrid Identity

Much of the scholarly discourse in Chinese studies over the past years focuses on the concept of "Chineseness" in diasporic Chinese communities. In such research, scholars seek to explicate the complex relationship between global Chinese populations and their Chinese homeland. Lok Siu (2005) argues that three factors contribute to these complex relationships: "China's immense presence in the global political economy, China's image as the 'Other' in the Western imagination, and the symbolic construction of China as the cultural and geographical core of 'Chinese identity'" (p. 76). As a result, Siu (2005) writes, "diasporic Chinese…look to China for identity and a sense of belonging" (Ibid.). Even amid the diasporic community's focus on China in establishing identity, researchers must focus on the local enactments of such identification. James Clifford (1997) argues against centering diasporas around homelands and eventual returns, noting that it "overrides the specific local interactions…necessary for the maintenance of diasporic social forms" (p. 269). Likewise, cultural studies scholar Ien Ang (1998) contends that China should not be the primary focus when studying Chineseness in diasporic populations.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, Chineseness within the Chinese diaspora of Panama emerges through a combination of historical and current issues reflected through musical expression. As a post-colonial community established in Panama in the 19th century, Chinese Panamanians live within Paul Gilroy's (1993) notion of the double consciousness of being both Chinese and Panamanian. Through Gilroy's (1993) anti-anti-essentialist viewpoint, the community's shared qualities of being Chinese situate them through a common identity marked by their Chineseness. Additionally, the difference of individual expressions within the

soundscapes represent Gilroy's (1993) discussion of Amiri Baraka's (1967) concept of the changing same, since even though the musical expressions differ, they all express a shared identity. Within Panama, this identity emerges from their history of societal racism, which I contend reflects Fredrickson's (1988) argument about societal racism.

Today, this community experiences transnational political pressures from the supercultural powers of Panama, the United States, the PRC, and Taiwan, as discussed by Lok Siu (2005). Mark Slobin's (1992) notion of the superculture is especially important, considering the power that these nations exert over smaller communities like the one in El Dorado. As a result, the community must negotiate their identities to reflect their stance for or against these powerful and conflicting entities. Socially, one way they manage these pressures is through their engagement with transnational music genres and the creation of acoustic territories where they can embrace the Chinese and Panamanian dimensions of their identities. Through engagement with transnational genres like Cantopop and Mandopo, Chinese Panamanians enact spaces through which they can create and maintain their hybridity.

By engaging with Chinese language musics alongside Spanish language genres, Chinese Panamanians assert that their Chineseness is just as important to them as their Panamanianess. Reflecting Deborah Wong's (2004) analysis of the musical agency of La Quian and Zheng's (2010) research with New York's Chinese community, Chinese Panamanians in El Dorado exert agency through their musical engagement and their assertion of their Asian identities within a Panamanian context. Their auditory displays of identity, in the form of audioarchitectures and soundscapes, demonstrate their agency in defining themselves and the ways in which they wish to be seen and accepted by the rest of Panamanian society. As demonstrated in chapter 4, this agency can be seen in the Chinese community's embracement of Lysloff and Gay's (2003)

musical technoculture. Through their mediality and incorporation of digital internet technologies and MP3s (Sterne, 2012), Chinese Panamanians create endless possibilities for Chinese Panamanian musical expression in ways that would not have been possible 30 years ago.

Throughout this thesis, I have situated Chinese Panamanian identity in El Dorado through the community's marginalized past, the acoustic soundscapes created by the community, and community members' engagement with Chinese popular music and technoculture. I expound upon these notions to further localize the concept of Chineseness within a Panamanian context to offer possibilities for future research. Demonstrated through the case studies provided in the previous chapter, I maintain Ang's (1998) claims that Chineseness "operates as an open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated" (p. 225). As such, Chinese Panamanian identity indicates a specific case unique to Panama's Chinese diaspora. The preceding chapters show the diverse and complex expressions of Chineseness in Panama and suggest the importance for considering histories, global economy, and the localized constructions of identity when studying music expression in Chinese diasporic communities. In this chapter, I conclude with an examination of two Chinese Panamanian icons that represent the changes occurring within the diaspora, a result of the technoculture of Chinese Panamanian youth.

Chinese Culture Center

The Chinese Culture Center, which is attached to El Dorado mall, features Chinese music CDs, films, and a variety of other trinkets and memorabilia imported to Panama from China. In the past, this store has been the center for local Chinese Panamanians to purchase Chinese music and films. However, with the growth of the musical technoculture discussed in chapter 4, younger generations find more and more of their music through the internet and in wireless and

digital formats. Younger generations now see music through the vantage point of digital transmission instead of in the past, where people seeking new music looked toward physical copies in the form of cassette tapes and CDs. As I browsed through the Culture Center, I saw rows of merchandise that included CDs, DVDs, and books in Chinese languages. On the other side of the store, ornate teapots and tea blends were stacked high on shelves. Everything in the store was organized to meet the needs of any customers who entered wishing to purchase imported Chinese products. Though I was not able to read the visible Chinese characters, any observer could note that the music was organized by genre.

When asked about the general ages of her customers who purchase Chinese music, the Chinese Panamanian shopkeeper related that the ages ranged from "*treinta años como a sesenta años*" (thirty year-olds to 60 year-olds) and that "*los jóvenes saben bajar internet*" (young people know how to download from the internet) (Unnamed shop worker, personal communication, July, 2014). The shop worker laments that "*ahora el negocio casi muerto*" (now, business is almost dead) since people can purchase and download all of their music from the internet (Ibid.). Due to the strong impact of the technoculture on Chinese youth ability to acquire new music and films in Chinese languages, the store's overall sales had declined in recent years. The shopkeeper commented that on some days, only one or two customers frequented the store. On some of the worst days, the Chinese Culture Center would have no sales at all. This case further demonstrates a shift in Panama toward the digital media and technologies available through the internet-based commodification of music and film.

Brenda Lau: The Zhongshanese Singing Idol of Panama

In contrast to the declining business of the Chinese Culture Center, the potential for local music and music performances by Chinese Panamanians has grown in recent years. A notable

example of this trend is Chinese Panamanian singer Brenda Lau. Born in Panama, Lau's singing career began in a Panama City restaurant that hosts a regular karaoke competition (Lau, 2012). Notably, Lau expresses her love of singing Chinese songs, especially Hong Kong pop songs (Ibid.) When she was in middle school, Lau had already become a famous karaoke star in the Chinese Panamanian community and, as a result, her dream to pursue music grew. At the age of 16, she attempted to study abroad and saved money for travel to the UK, however, this goal ultimately failed due to her lack of knowledge about visa requirements.

In 2008, Brenda Lau competed in the nationally televised Panamanian singing contest *Vive la música*, where she won 2nd place. Like the *Idol* competitions featured in many countries throughout the world, contestants on *Vive la música* perform each week in the hope of accumulating the most nominations from public voters. In order to win votes, competitors must appease Panamanian viewers, since every week, the contestant with the least amount of votes is eliminated from the competition. At the end of each season, one contestant is named the winner. Due to the demand for national consumer appeal, all of the songs Lau performed in the competition were Spanish popular songs. Determined to pursue her dream of becoming a Panamanian singer, she participated in the All Stars season of the same competition in 2010, at which point she was declared the winner. Throughout the competition, Lau performed a variety of Spanish-language popular songs and ballads, reflecting the nature of the show as an icon of a Spanish-language national identity rather than individual identity. Since it is the official language of Panama and the most commonly spoken language in the country, Spanish performances are required of contestants, thus limiting performer choice in favor of mass consumer appeal. After becoming famous for winning this popular Panamanian singing contest, Lau now performs original music in addition to covers of Taiwanese popular songs.

Brenda Lau has continually emphasized her Chineseness through the entirety of her singing career. Performing Hong Kong popular songs in karaoke contests within Panama, Lau regularly embraces her Asian heritage even though she was born and raised in Panama. Further, Lau sings songs in both Mandarin and in Spanish, demonstrating the localization of Mandopop music within a Panamanian context. However, even though she performs many covers in Mandarin, she also performs original music in Spanish. Representing her hybridity, Lau's original 2014 song "*Chimbombo*" features lyrics based on the poem "*Incidente de Cumbia*" by AfroPanamanian poet Demetrio Korsi (Lau, 2014). Additionally, her success in a Panamanian national singing competition reflects a growing embracement of the Chinese community as a society, especially considering that the general public votes for the winners of the show. By performing in these multiple languages, engaging with Chinese popular music, and creating new music based on Panamanian poets and writers, Brenda Lau performs her multiple identities and asserts her agency by expressing herself as both Chinese and Panamanian.

Final Thoughts & Possibilities for Future Research

The cultural and musical hybridity demonstrated by the Chinese diaspora in Panama represents one example among many diasporic Chinese communities who shape their identities through the use of music and technoculture. Since the mass migrations of Chinese in the 19th century, Chinese communities have faced similar marginalized histories and have had to overcome their harsh treatment through their strong connections to the multiple Chinas. The uniqueness of the Chinese diaspora in Panama results from the ways in which community members negotiate their dual identity to create a specifically Chinese Panamanian hybridity. This research is significant for understanding diasporic Chinese communities living within non-Asian communities. Western culture focuses so intently on categorizing and essentializing groups of

people to the point where Asian communities and contributions are strikingly absent from general knowledge about Latin American culture.

The research presented in this thesis represents the "tip of the iceberg" when examining the Chinese Panamanian community. Apart from this analysis of the relationship among music, identity, and technoculture and Lok Siu's (2005) comprehensive investigation of Chinese Panamanian belonging, little research exists regarding the Chinese experience in Panama. The phenomenon of only women being willing to participate in my research was of notable interest. Through a combination of Chinese and gender studies, a deeper understanding of this occurrence would be possible. Musically, further research involving gender might reveal similarities or differences regarding how Chinese Panamanian men and women see their roles in the musical experience of the community, whether it is in the form of culture-bearing, enacting musical agency, or the responsibility of constructing a hybrid soundscape. Additional research possibilities include deeper analyses of the music of Brenda Lau, the environment of her performances, and critical commentary on her reception by general Panamanian society. Finally, though I focus on El Dorado, which is located in Panama's capital, there are multiple Chinatowns throughout the country. This thesis focuses on one community's expression of identity and does not seek to generalize about all Chinese Panamanian communities. The other large Chinatown in Panama, located in the province of Colón, could provide new and different understandings of Chinese identity within the Latin American context.

Conclusion

My work contributes to continued research in the areas of identity, technoculture, and soundscapes, all with regard to music and agency. Through my incorporation of scholarly ethnomusicological theories, I promote understandings of music in its local, cultural context and

avoid generalizing about Chinese diaspora throughout the world. Though similarities exist across cultures, each community deserves its own personal understandings of the role music plays in identity, achieved through ethnographic research. In this context, Chinese Panamanians use the availability of the internet to engage with digital and streaming technologies to assert their Chinese Panamanian hybrid identities within acoustic territories, thus creating a unique soundscape. Through a deep analysis of the Chinese community's complex history, hybrid soundscapes, and engagement with technologies, I demonstrate this Chinese diaspora's musical assertion of their Chinese Panamanian identity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.* New York: Verso.

Ang, I. (1998). Can one say no to Chineseness? Pushing the limits of the diasporic paradigm. *boundary 2, 25*(3), pp. 223-242.

Bennett, A. (2000). *Popular music and youth culture: Music, identity and place.* New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc.

Benson, P. (2013). English and identity in East Asian popular music. *Popular music, 32*(1), pp. 23-33.

Berger, H.M. (2003). Introduction: The politics and aesthetics of language choice and dialect in popular music. In H.M. Berger & M.T. Carroll (Eds.), *Global pop, local language* (pp. ix-xxvi). Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Brace, T., Lee, J.C., & Wong, C.P. (2001). Syncretic traditions and western idioms: Popular music. In Provine, R. (Ed.), *Garland encyclopedia of world music volume 7: East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea* (pp. 353-361). New York: Routledge.

Canclini, N.G. (1995). *Hybrid cultures: Strategies for entering and leaving modernity.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Chang, S.E., & Lung-Amam, W. (2010). Born glocal: Youth identity and suburban spaces in the U.S. and Taiwan. *Amerasia Journal, 36*(3), pp. 29-52.

Chen, B. A.P. (2010). *Cómo, cuándo y por qué llegaron los chinos a Panamá*. Panamá, Rep. de Panamá: Management Development Corporation.

_____. (2014). *Presencia China en las construcciones del ferrocarril y del canal de Panamá (1852-1914)*. Panamá, Rep. de Panamá: Management Development Corporation.

Chu, Y., & Leung, E. (2013). Remapping Hong Kong popular music: Covers, localisation and the waning hybridity of Cantopop. *Popular music, 32*(1), pp. 65-78.

Clayton, M. (2009). Local practice, global network: The guitar in India as a case study. In Wolf, R.K. (Ed.), *Theorizing the local: Music, practice, and experience in South Asia and beyond* (pp. 65-78). New York: Oxford University Press.

Clifford, J. (1997). *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cooley, T.J., & Barz, G. (2008). Casting shadows: Fieldwork is dead! Long live fieldwork! Introduction. In Cooley, T.J., & Barz, G. (Eds.), *Shadows in the field: New perspectives for fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (2nd ed.) (pp. 3-24). New York: Oxford University Press.

Cooper, J.F. (2013). *Taiwan: Nation-state or province?* (6th ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

DuBois, W.E.B. (2004 [1903]). *The souls of black folk*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Edwards, B.H. (2003). *The practice of diaspora: Literature, translation, and the rise of black internationalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Embajada de la República de China (Taiwán) en Panamá. (2010). *Breve introduccion de la embajada de la República de China (Taiwán) en Panamá*. Retrieved from http://www.taiwanembassy.org/PA/ct.asp?xItem=3399&CtNode=1989&mp=302&xp1=

Feld, S. (1984). Communication, music, and speech about music. *Yearbook for Traditional Music, 16*(1), pp. 1-18.

Fox, A.A. (2004). *Real country: Music and language in working-class culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Fredrickson, G.M. (1988). Social origins of American racism. In *The arrogance of race: Historical perspectives on slavery, racism, and social inequality* (1st ed., pp. 189-205). Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The interpretation of cultures* (pp. 3-30). New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gilroy, P. (1993). *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double-consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Greene, J. (2009). *The canal builders: Making America's empire at the Panama Canal*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Greene P.D. (2005). Introduction: Wired sound and sonic cultures. In P. D. Greene & T. Porcello (Eds.), *Wired for sound: Engineering and technologies in sonic cultures* (pp. 1-22). Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.

Guy, N. (2001). Syncretic traditions and western idioms: Popular music. In Provine, R. (Ed.), *Garland encyclopedia of world music volume 7: East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea* (pp. 353-361). New York: Routledge.

Harding, R.C. (2001). *Military foundations of Panamanian politics*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Hom, M.K. (1987). *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Jackson, E. (2004). Panama's Chinese community celebrates a birthday, meets new challenges. *The Panama News 10*(9). Retrieved from http://www.thepanamanews.com/pn/v_10/issue_09/community_01.html

Jones, L. (1967). *Black music*. New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc.

Kapferer, B. (2009). Agency or human agency. In T. Barfield (Ed.), *Dictionary of anthropology* (p. 4). Oxford: Blackwell Press.

Kisliuk, M. (2008). (Un)doing fieldwork: Sharing songs, sharing lives. In Cooley, T.J., & Barz, G. (Eds.), *Shadows in the field: New perspectives for fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (2nd ed.) (pp. 183-205). New York: Oxford University Press.

LaBelle, B. (2010). *Acoustic territories: Sound culture and everyday life.* New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Lau, B. (2012, June 25). *The overseas Zhongshanese documentary (Panama, 劉毅珊 - Brenda Lau)* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-08h_nJuD8

_____. (2014, July 16). *Chimbombó – Brenda Lau* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj6ZrpwqqkY

Lee, J., & Zhou, M. (2004). *Asian American youth: Culture, identity, and ethnicity*. New York: Routledge.

Lee, J.C. (1992). Cantopop songs on emigration from Hong Kong. *Yearbook for Traditional Music, 24*(1), pp. 14-23.

Lee, T.S. (2003). Technology and the production of Islamic space: The Call to Prayer in Singapore. In Lysloff, R. T. A., & Gay, L. C. (Eds.). *Music and technoculture* (pp. 109-124). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Lyrics Bu Xiang Zhang Da (Don't Feel Like Growing Up) - S.H.E. (n.d.). Retrieved May 6, 2015, from http://www.jpopasia.com/lyrics/9719/she/bu-xiang-zhang-da-dont-feel-like-growing-up.html

Lysloff, R.T.A., & Gay, L.C. (2003). *Music and technoculture*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Mackey, N. (1978). The changing same: Black music in the poetry of Amiri Baraka. *boundary 2, 6*(2), pp. 355-386.

Manuel, P. (1993). *Cassette culture: Popular music and technology in North India*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mayer, R. (2011). A "Bit of Orient Set Down in the Heart of a Western Metropolis": The Chinatown in the United States and Europe. In V. Künnemann & R. Mayer (Eds.), *Chinatowns in a transnational world: Myths and realities of an urban phenomenon* (pp. 1-25). New York: Routledge.

McGuinness, A. (2008). *Path of empire: Panama and the California gold rush.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

McKay, S.C. (2007). Filipino sea men: Identity and masculinity in a global labor niche. In R.S. Parreñas, & L.C.D. Siu (Eds.), *Asian diasporas: New formations, new conceptions* (pp. 63-83). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Mellander, G.A. (1971). *The United States in Panamanian politics: The intriguing formative years*. Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc.

Moskowitz, M.L. (2009). Mandopop under siege: culturally bound criticisms of Taiwan's pop music. *Popular music, 28*(1), pp. 69-83.

Munch, P.A. (1964). Culture and superculture in a displaced community: Tristan da Cunha. *Ethnology, 3*(4), pp. 369-376.

National Archives. (1882). "An act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating to the Chinese, May 6, 1882." *Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996*. General Records of the United States Government (Record Group 11).

Olsen, D.A. (2004). *The chrysanthemum and the song: Music, memory, and identity in the South American Japanese diaspora*. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida.

Paisanito. (2013, May 23). Restaurante Jumbo [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://paisanito.com/restaurante-jumbo-panama-el-dorado/

Pan, L. (1990). *Sons of the yellow emperor: A history of the Chinese diaspora*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

Parreñas, R. (2001). *Servants of globalization: Women, migration and domestic work.* Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Ramsey, G.P. (2003). *Race music: Black cultures from bebop to hip-hop*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Regmi, A. (2015). China FM Radio (Version 3.6) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/china-fm-radio-top-mandarin/id925467814?mt=8

Rigger, S. (2011). *Why Taiwan matters: Small island, global powerhouse.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Safran, W. (1991). Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies, 1*(1), pp. 83-99.

Sakakeeny, M. (2013). *Roll with it: Brass bands in the streets of New Orleans.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Schafer, R.M. (1994). *The soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world.* Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.

Schott, J.L. (1967). *Rails across Panama: The story of the building of the Panama railroad.* New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.

Sheffer, G. (1986). *Modern diasporas in international politics.* London: Croom Helm.

Siu, L.C.D. (2005). *Memories of a future home: Diasporic citizenship of Chinese in Panama*. Stanford, California: Stafford University Press.

Slobin, M. (1992). Micromusics of the west: A comparative approach. *Ethnomusicology 36*(1), 1-87.

Spradley, J. (1979). Interviewing an informant, Making an ethnographic record, & Asking descriptive questions. In *The ethnographic interview* (pp. 55-91). New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Steingo, G. (2015). Sound and circulation: Immobility and obduracy in South African electronic music. *Ethnomusicology Forum, 24*(1), 102-123.

Sterne, J. (2003). Sounds like the Mall of America: Programmed music and the architectonic of commercial space. In R.T.A. Lysloff & L.C. Gay (Eds.), *Music and technoculture* (pp. 316-345). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

_____. (2012). *MP3: The meaning of a format.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Stokes, M. (1997). Introduction: Ethnicity, identity, and music. In M. Stokes (Ed.), *Ethnicity, identity and music: The musical construction of place* (pp. 1-27). New York: Berg Publishers Limited.

Sturman, J.L. (2003). Technology and identity in Colombian popular music: Tecno-macondismo in Carlos Vive's approach to vallenato. In R.T.A. Lysloff & L.C. Gay (Eds.), *Music and technoculture* (pp. 153-181). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Taylor, T.D. (1997). *Global pop: World music, world markets.* New York: Routledge.

_____. (2001). Music, technology, agency, and practice. In *Strange sounds: Music, technology, & culture* (pp. 16-38). New York: Routledge.

_____. (2003). A riddle wrapped in a mystery: Transnational music sampling and Enigma's "Return to Innocence." In R.T.A. Lysloff & L.C. Gay (Eds.), *Music and technoculture* (pp. 64-92). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Tok, S.K. (2013). *Managing China's sovereignty in Hong Kong and Taiwan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Turino, T., & Lea, J. (Eds.). (2004). *Identity and the arts in diaspora communities*. Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press.

Wai-Chung, H. (2006). A historical review of popular music and social change in Taiwan. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences, 34*(1), pp. 120-147.

Wilcox, M., & Rines, G.E. (Eds.). (1917). *Encyclopedia of Latin America: Dealing with the life, achievement, and national development of the countries of South and Central America, Mexico and Panama, the West Indies, and giving special information on commerce, industry, banking, finance, railways, shipping, transportation, communications, trade, tariff, customs, and all matters of commercial importance.* New York: The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation.

Wing-Fai, L. (2014). *Perceptions of the east – yellow peril: An archive of anti-Asian fear.* Retrieved from http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/perceptions-of-the-east-yellow-peril-an-archive-of-anti-asian-fear-1.1895696

Wong, D. (2003). Plugged in at home: Vietnamese American technoculture in Orange County. In R.T.A. Lysloff & L.C. Gay (Eds.), *Music and technoculture* (pp. 125-152). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

_____. (2004). *Speak it louder: Asian Americans making music*. New York: Routledge.

World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People. (2009). *Chinese Panamanians*. Retrieved from http://www.minorityrights.org/4217/panama/chinese-panamanians.html

Yi, Z. (2011). DuoMi (Version 1.5.5) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/duo-mi-dian-tai/id480591673?mt=8

Yuval-Davis, N. (1997). *Gender and nation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yuan, L. (2006, April). *S.H.E - Bu Xiang Zhang Da (Don't Want to Grow Up)* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j61e-TXt4O0

Zheng, S. (1992). From Toison to New York: Muk'yu songs in folk tradition. *CHINOPERL: Journal of Chinese Oral and Performing Literature, 16*(1), pp. 165-205.

_____. (2010). *Claiming diaspora: Music, transnationalism, and cultural politics in Asian/Chinese America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX

Figure 1.1. Almacen La Cultura China [Chinese Culture Center][2]

Figure 1.2. Almacen La Cultura China (Chinese Culture Center)

[2] All photos are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Figure 1.3. Chinese Panamanian displays in El Dorado mall

Figure 1.4. Hung's Center in El Dorado mall

Figure 1.5. Sun Yat-sen Institute

Figure 1.6. Bust of Sun Yat-sen inside of the Sun Yat-sen Institute

Figure 1.7. Entrance to the Panama and Taiwan Friendship Park

Figure 1.8. Sign at the entrance to Barrio Chino (Paisanito, 2013)

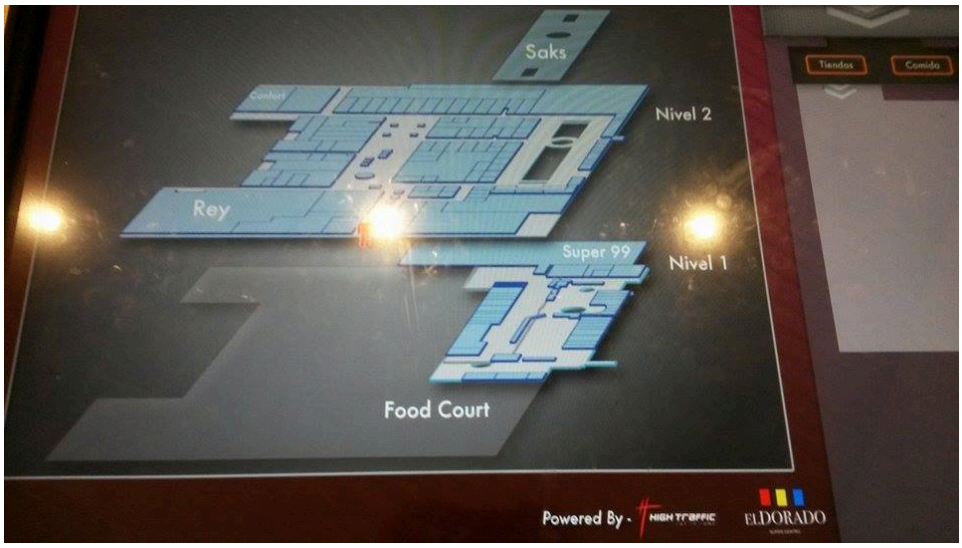

Figure 1.9. Map of El Dorado Mall

Figure 1.10. El Dorado Mall Information Center

Figure 2.1. Pai Zai at Restaurante Jumbo in El Dorado (Paisanito, 2013)

Figure 2.2. Pak Chi Kai at Restaurante Jumbo in El Dorado (Paisanito, 2013)

Figure 2.3. Puerco Especial at Restaurante Jumbo in El Dorado (Paisanito, 2013)

Figure 2.4. Sign for the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas 2014 Conference in Panama City, Panama

Figure 2.5. Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela speaking at the Inauguration of the Chinese in Panama exhibit at the Panama Canal on August 2, 2014 (Paisanito, 2013)

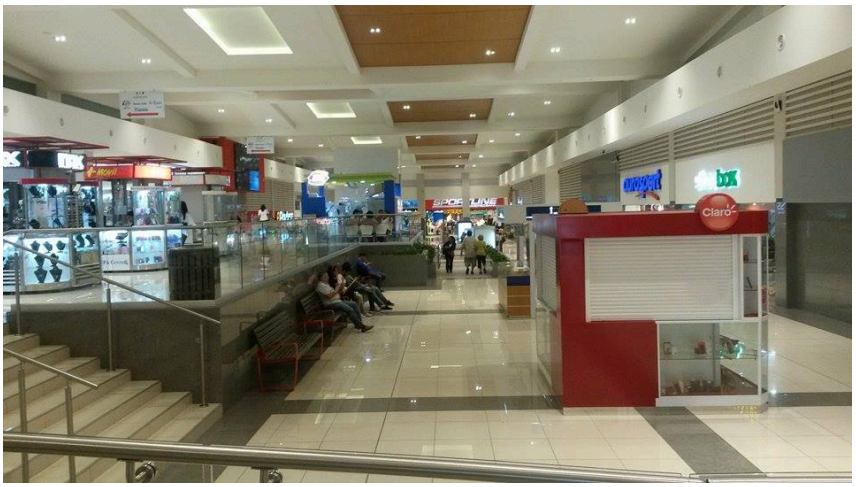

Figure 3.1. The atrium of El Dorado mall

Figure 4.1. Screenshot from the music video of S.H.E.'s "Bu Xiang Zhang Da" (Don't Want to Grow Up) (Yuan, 2006)

VITA

Corey Michael Blake graduated from James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, with a Bachelor of Music in Voice Education, and a minor in Anthropology. He received his Master of Music from the University of Tennessee Knoxville in 2015. At Tennessee, Corey won the Student Music Research Contest as part of the University of Tennessee's Distinguished Lecture Series in 2015, presenting a paper based on his ethnography of the Sevier County Old Harp Singers.

Corey's research interests involve the music of Central America, including the formation of identity in diasporic populations and the relationships between music and social strata. Additionally, he presented his work, "Kuna Soundscapes: Ecological Representation in Ritual Healing," at the Ecomusicologies conference in Asheville, NC in 2014 and "Old Harp Singing in Sevierville, Tennessee: Family Traditions and Rural Identity," at the Society for Ethnomusicology, Southeast and Caribbean chapter meeting in Knoxville, TN in 2015. Corey has recently accepted admission to the University of California, Riverside, where he has received the Dean's Distinguished Fellowship. At the University of California, Riverside, he will work on his PhD in Ethnomusicology.